The Implementation of the Rights of the Child: Transcending the Traditional Practice of
Child Marriage in Niger, Yemen, and Thailand

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Abstract

      Child marriage is a harmful traditional practice that affects approximately 60 million children around the globe. This thesis examines the different laws that protect children from this practice and analyzes its implementation in countries where traditional practices violate children's rights. International provisions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, charges state parties with the responsibility to protect their children. Each state has the capacity to transcend traditional practices and implement local laws that protect their children. This thesis claims that mobilization of advocacy groups is vital in promoting the well-being of children even when the norms established by social groups appear to be unchangeable. It begins with an overview of what child marriage is and how it should be a concern to the international community. The case studies considered for this thesis is Niger, Yemen and Thailand.

Introduction

Introduction

        There are many violations to children's rights that countries need to address, such as: violence, child labor, and sexual exploitation. Child marriage was once an accepted traditional practice. Over the years, its practice has diminished considerably and is increasingly frowned upon in many countries where it is practiced. Although governments around the world have attempted to eradicate child marriage, it continues to exist to a significant extent as a traditional practice in rural areas and amongst people living in poverty.[1] Most of these people lack the resources to change the course of their futures and due to deprived circumstances, find it difficult to see any other alternatives. How can states transcend traditional practices in order to implement laws that protect children from harm? Are the laws established by states achieving compliance in rural areas where child marriage is perpetuated?

Justification

        For the purpose of this thesis, I will concentrate on different international declarations, conventions, and laws that are intended to protect children and analyze their implementation in countries where traditional practices violate children's rights. For instance, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognizes parents as natural care givers but charge state parties with the responsibility to take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against "all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members."[2] This research examines the CRC state parties'

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[1] The Population Council, "Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health: Charting Directions for a Second Generation of Programming," *The Population Council,* 2002, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/adolsrh.pdf.
[2] UN General Assembly, "Convention on the Rights of the Child," *United Nations,* 1989. Art 4.

ability to transcend the traditional practice of child marriage and implement local laws that protect their children.

This thesis will be addressing the following questions:

- What approaches are state parties (Niger, Yemen and Thailand) taking to implement laws against child marriage?
- What challenges do states face when confronting traditional practices that violate the rights of the child established in the CRC?
- What role do NGOs and advocacy groups play in reaching out to rural areas where child marriage is practiced?
- What can states learn from countries that have established local laws to eradicate child marriage?

The CRC was created in 1989 by the United Nations to expand human rights and concentrate on the specific needs of children in the world. This Convention is the first legally binding international instrument that covers all aspects of human rights concerning children and holds state parties responsible for implementing local laws that protect their children. Each country has its cultural and traditional practices that can represent a challenge for states when implementing laws to protect its children. While marriage is not mentioned directly in the CRC, child marriage is linked to other rights, such as the right to express their views freely, the right to protection from all forms of abuse, and the right to be protected from harmful traditional practices.

Child marriage undermines numerous rights guaranteed by the CRC such as: the right to education (Article 28); the right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, including sexual abuse (Article 19) and from all forms of sexual exploitation (Article 34); the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24); the right to educational and vocational information and guidance (Article 28); the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas (Article 13); the right to rest and leisure, and to participate freely in cultural life (Article 31); the

right to not be separated from their parents against their will (Article 9): and, the right to

protection against all forms of exploitation affecting any aspect of the child's welfare

(Article 36).[3]

The United Nations Population Fund carried out a study that compared the

conditions of countries that practice child marriage with Taiwan, South Korea, and

Thailand, which have eradicated this traditional practice.[4] The study revealed that the

countries practicing child marriage have: 1) high poverty, birth and death rates, 2) greater

incidence of conflict and civil strife, and 3) lower levels of overall development,

including schooling, employment and health care.[5] Taiwan, South Korea, and Thailand,

on the other hand, are experiencing: 1) economic growth and opportunity, 2) a decline in

birth and death rates, and 3) increase in educational and employment opportunities.[6]

Child marriage affects the health of young girls in many ways. These girls are not

physically, psychologically, and sexually mature enough for marriage.[7] They are most

likely to become pregnant, and there is a strong correlation between the age of the mother

and maternal mortality.[8] Good prenatal care can reduce the risk of childbirth

complications, but due to lack of freedom and information, young wives have no access

to health services, which exacerbates the risks of maternal complications and mortality.

"Because young girls are not ready for the responsibilities and roles of being a wife,

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[3] Judith Bruce, "Married Adolescent Girls: Human Rights, Health and Developmental Needs of a Neglected Majority," *United Nations Special Session on Children*. (2003): 4378.
[4] UNICEF. "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A Statistical exploration." *UNICEF.* 2005, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] UNFPA and International Parenthood Planning Foundation. "Ending Child Marriage: A Guide for Global Policy Action." IPPF. Sep 2006, accessed February 10, 2011, http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf.

sexual partner and a mother, child marriage has a serious negative impact on their psychological well-being and personal development."[9]

Since many child marriages are unofficial and go unregistered, it is difficult to know the exact number of children involved in this practice. UNICEF estimates that more than 60 million children worldwide are affected by this practice.[10] According to The International Center for Research on Women, "if present trends continue, 100 million girls will marry over the next decade. That's 25,000 girls married every day for the next 10 years."[11] This harmful traditional practice merits the attention of the international community.

Like many other international agreements, children's rights have not reached the level of enforcement that many organizations, advocates, and leaders would like. Throughout history, the voice of children's rights has been the most difficult to be heard.[12] This is primarily due to the dependency that children have on adults to care for them. The CRC sets out rules and norms as to how children should be treated and establishes grounds for governments, advocates, and different networks to lookout for situations that concern children and in this matter create better ways to stop and prevent abuse against them.

[9] International Humanist and Ethical Union. "Child Marriage: A Violation of Human Rights." April 23, 2007, accessed February 11, 2011, http://www.iheu.org/child-marriage-a-violation-of-human-rights.
[10] UNICEF. "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A Statistical exploration." *UNICEF*. 2005, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf.
[11] International Center for Research on Women. "Child Marriage Facts and Figures," accessed January 11, 2011, http://www.icrw.org/child-marriage-facts-and-figures.
[12] United Nations. "Background Note: Children's Rights." *United Nations Department of Public Information*. 1995, accessed February 15, 2011, http://wwwupdate.un.org/rights/dpi1765e.htm.

Hypothesis

This thesis argues that countries are able to transcend cultural practices that

endanger children, such as child marriage, and establish laws that protect them from any

harm. The implementation of laws alone will not eradicate the practice of child marriage;

enforcement and education can help in eliminating this practice. As mentioned before,

child marriage is mostly practiced in rural communities, and many of these marriages are

unofficial and go unregistered.[13] For this reason, even though countries may have laws

that prohibit child marriage, the practice continues in remote areas of society were

scrutiny is less likely to take place. Throughout history, we have witnessed various

practices that violate human rights covered under the mantle of cultural tradition and

even beauty.   Once laws have been established to forbid the practice, most of the time it

continues and this is where NGOs and advocacy groups play an important role. For

example, through the practice of footbinding in Chinese women we can observe the

ability that social norms and practices had in order to shift and adapt to different beliefs

and behaviors. This practice lasted nearly a thousand years and was able to find its end in

a little more than a generation's time. Some social norms are difficult to change and take

much longer than others. For this thesis, the role of social constructivism in the

traditional practice of child marriage will be explained.

The hypothesis of this thesis is that the mobilization of advocacy groups is vital in

promoting the well-being of children even when the norms established by social groups

appear to be unchangeable. Their ability to transcend cultural practices through education

and efforts to change the social view of child marriage is what will play an important role

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[13] United Nations. "Background Note: Children's Rights." *United Nations Department of Public Information*. 1995, accessed February 15, 2011, http://wwwupdate.un.org/rights/dpi1765e.htm.

in the eradication of this practice. Many social practices that violate human rights have

seen their end through the pressure that NGOs and international initiatives have

employed over governments. They have the ability to reach out to social groups and help

them move passed their ideas and norms and replace them with practices that promote

children's rights. For example, over the last years, the media has covered several cases of

young girls escaping from abusive older husbands. In April 2008, the case of a 10 year-

old Yemeni girl, Nujood Ali, reached the headlines around the world when she went to

court requesting a divorce. Soon after her case, the media started reporting on more cases

similar to Nujood's.[14] In 2009, Yemen passed a bill that intended to raise the minimum

marriage age to 17 but was dropped because of pressure from religious groups.[15]

Nujood's case has been an inspiration to other girls who are deprived of their freedom

and rights. The boldness of young girls stepping out of what in their world seems to be

the norm shows a shift in practice that can lead to the abolition of this appalling

phenomenon.

      The CRC alone lacks the ability to transcend cultural practices. Each country has

the responsibility to implement laws and see them come to pass. Each government

understands its culture and how to approach the practices that violate the rights

established in the CRC. I believe that by state parties establishing local laws along with

the involvement of NGOs and advocacy groups, the ideas and culture behind the practice

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[14] When Nujood escaped from her husband and went off to the nearest courthouse, a well-known lawyer took her case and together fought against a legal system where almost half of girls marry before 18 years of age. Her case was a success and soon enough became an inspiration to other girls oppressed by this practice. Discussed on Chapter V.
[15] Maia Blume, "Vote on Child Marriage in Yemen Delayed Indefinitely," *Change.org*, October 11, 2010, accessed February 10, 2011, http://news.change.org/stories/vote-on-child-marriage-in-yemen-delayed-indefinitely.

of child marriage can see its end. Through the organization of advocacy groups, law can come into enforcement and eradicate traditional practices that harm children.

Theoretical Approach

Constructivist analysis is used to explain the practice of child marriage. The essential observation of constructivism is that human relations are led more by ideas than by physical things. This thought challenged Kenneth Waltz's neorealism, which argued that state behavior was determined by the international system in which states existed and operated.[16] Instead, constructivists believe that someone must have constructed that system in the first place, and that the system is continually being built, modified, and rebuilt.

Constructivism explores the role that ideas, norms, and culture play in promoting structural change. Norm entrepreneurs are actors that advocate on behalf of different ideas or behaviors that should or should not be practiced. They advocate from organizational platforms that position their ideas to give them credibility. These advocates persuade other actors to alter their behavior and beliefs in accordance with the norm the entrepreneur believes that these actors should accept. Constructivists debate about how entrepreneurs convince actors to change their ideas but persuasion, coercion, and socialization are acknowledged. It is a process of construction and reconstruction, which can involve constant change.

Social constructivism helps us understand how ideas and norms shape politics and how politics shapes ideas and norms. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink explain

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[16] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 102.

how social construction takes place through the "norm life cycle."[17] This norm has three stages: emergence, a norm emerges when a person or institution takes the role of an entrepreneur and seeks to approach a critical mass of actors to accept a new idea; cascade, occurs when there is a rapid diffusion of the norm; and, internalization happens when the norm is taken for granted, and is hardly ever questioned.

As mentioned earlier, child marriage is a traditional practice that evidently affects young girls. Advocates, NGOs, and international initiatives play a significant role in changing the course of this, and other, social practices that compromise children's rights. "The cause of children is regarded as capable of transcending national, political and social divisions and enlisting people globally to counter social problems and militate against disorder and conflict."[18]

Methodology and Research Design

This thesis focuses on three case studies in order to analyze the implementation of local laws that protect children from child marriage. As mentioned, the traditional practice of child marriage in Niger, Yemen and Thailand are the case studies. The reason why these countries were chosen was because: Niger currently has the highest rate (74 percent) of child marriage among countries that practice it; in Yemen, there has been a struggle between the parliament, which is trying to raise the minimum age for marriage to 17, and religious leaders, who are against it; and, Thailand exemplifies how appropriate policies can help countries attain the improvement they need. The challenges that Niger and Yemen have had in order to create laws that protect children against child marriage

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[17] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 4 (1998): 896, accessed January 11, 2011.
[18] David Chandler, *Rethinking Human Rights: Critical Approaches to International Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 57.

and the progress that Thailand has had in developing policies that have improved the condition of rural areas will be explained. This thesis compares the different stages these countries are in and provides a better understanding of the strong traditional ties attached to child marriage and give insight on how countries can move past traditional practices that compromise children's rights.

This thesis will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative information in order to examine the causes and consequences of child marriage in Niger, Yemen and Thailand. For this, the differences in culture, tradition, and law are taken into consideration. Numerous resources such as: books, articles, newspapers, reports, journals, chapters, interviews, and data sets were used. The thesis will provide a better perspective on the different struggles these countries have had in creating and implementing local laws to ensure that their children are enjoying their rights. It will also establish the importance of banning this grave practice along with the benefits that will derive from its eradication.

Chapter Outline

This thesis has eight chapters. The first chapter is an introduction that provides an overview of the focus of the thesis. It explains the thesis, justification, hypothesis and research design. The second chapter is a literature review, which provides an abstract of the different readings used during the research of child marriage. In the third chapter, the practice of child marriage is explained in depth. In this chapter the definition of this practice is provided along with an explanation of the causes of child marriage and how it affects children in different societies in the world. The fourth chapter is on Niger and the practice of child marriage in this country. The fifth chapter is on child marriage in

Yemen. This chapter also presents examples of how different young girls have fought

against child marriage and its impact on the country's government and culture. Chapter

six describes the conditions in which children in Thailand are found and discusses the

laws have been established in order to eliminate the practice of child marriage along with

the obtained progress. The seventh chapter explains why the practice of child marriage is

different in Niger, Yemen and Thailand. This chapter also describes the role of NGOs in

seeking an end to child marriage. The last chapter will be a conclusion on the

recommendations for law and policy reform. For this chapter, I take into consideration

the recommendations that scholars have proposed in order to implement practices that

benefit and lead children to live the fulfillment of their rights.

Chapter II-Literature Review

Literature Review

This chapter presents an overview of the most important readings used for the research on child marriage. This literature review provides a summary of how child marriage affects different world societies and the possible causes of this practice.

According to UNICEF's approximations, more than 60 million children worldwide are affected by child marriage.[19] The International Center for Research on Women states, "if present trends continue, 100 million girls will marry over the next decade. That's 25,000 girls married every day for the next 10 years."[20] UNICEF holds that in general, child marriage is becoming less common, but the pace of this change is slow.[21] "In 34 of the 55 countries with comparable data from two recent surveys, there has been no significant change in the percentage of women aged 20-24 married by 18 – and only 5 countries experienced a decrease of more than 10 per cent."[22]

The Innocent Digest reports that the practice of child marriage will vary depending "on a society's view of the family – its role, structure, pattern of life, and the individual and collective responsibilities of its members."[23] The report explains that the idea of what family is and its function is different to each country's social groups. For instance, Ursula Ebenhöh explains that throughout Western Europe and North America's history, marriages have taken place later in life.[24] "Because women and men marry as adults with experience of life, it is alien to accept unquestioningly a parental choice of

[19] UNICEF. "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A Statistical exploration." *UNICEF*. 2005, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf.
[20] International Center for Research on Women. "Child Marriage Facts and Figures," accessed January 11, 2011, http://www.icrw.org/child-marriage-facts-and-figures.
[21] UNICEF. "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice."
[22] Ibid.
[23] UNICEF, "Early Marriage: Child Spouses," *Innocenti Digest* 7 (2001): 5, accessed February 9, 2011. http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest7e.pdf.
[24] Ursula Ebenhöh, *Family History: Historical Changes and Regional Differences on that what is called "family"* (Germany: GRIN Verlag, 2004), 6.

spouse."[25] On the other hand, amongst some groups in Asia, the Middle East, and North

Africa marriage after puberty is common; in parts of Western and Eastern Africa, and

Southern Asia some girls marry before puberty.[26]

Susanne Mikhail holds that child marriage is deeply rooted in cultural values and

its practice is celebrated in some communities.[27] The families who engage in this practice

consider it a way to secure their child's future and at the same time alleviate their own

financial responsibilities.[28] Furthermore, child marriage is viewed as a way of preventing

girls from initiating sexual relations with unknown men.[29] The honor attached to this

practice has traditionally been linked to its central purpose, which is to assure virginity at

the time of marriage.[30] A research on child marriage in Indonesia and Nepal revealed that

the social group that had the highest amounts of child marriage cases was the most

traditional among the other provinces.[31] In many African cultures, parents of a virgin

bride are recompensed with gifts and the virgin is valued by her husband and honored by

his family.[32] "There is the unjustified belief that a child bride comes to learn and venerate

her husband from a very early age and will become firmly attached to him as she grows

older."[33] Bamgbose states that the increase of girls seeking help because of abuse and

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[25] UNICEF, "Early Marriage: Child Spouses," *Innocenti Digest* 7 (2001): 5, accessed February 9, 2011.
http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest7e.pdf.

[26] UNICEF. "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A Statistical exploration." *UNICEF*. 2005,
accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf.

[27] Susanne Louis B. Mikhail, "Child Marriage and Child Prostitution: Two Forms of Sexual Exploitation,"
Gender and Development 10 (2002): 43.

[28] Shanker Singh, Nikhil Dey and Aruna Roy, "Child Marriage, Government and NGOs," *Economic and
Political Weekly* 29 (1994): 1377.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Mikhail, "Child Marriage and Child Prostitution."

[31] Minja Choe Kim, Shyam Thapa, and Sulistinah Achmad, "Early Marriage and Childbearing in Indonesia
and Nepal." *East-West Center* 108 (2001): 7, accessed February 11, 2011.

[32] Oluyemisi Bamgbose, "Legal and Cultural Approaches to Sexual Matters in Africa: the Cry of the
Adolescent Girl," *University of Miami International and Comparative Law Review* 127. (2002), accessed
January 10, 2011.

[33] Ibid.

other situations they are involved in proves that this belief fails to hold true. Instead of drawing the young wife towards her husband, the violence and situation they are in draw these girls towards the opposite direction.[34]

"Poverty, protection of girls, fear of loss of virginity before marriage and related family honor, and the provision of stability during unstable social periods are suggested as significant factors in determining a girl's risk of becoming married as a child."[35] Most parents make their sons-in-law promise not to have sexual intercourse with their daughters until she starts to menstruate. Bamgbose holds that in many cases, this promise is disregarded. For example, Yemeni law allows girls to marry at any age but prohibits sexual intercourse until the girl is physically mature.[36] In African countries, there are laws that forbid sexual intercourse with any girl under the age of fourteen.[37] "It is said that such a young child (five or six) goes to her marriage home at this age and is nursed and generally brought up by her husband. However, the husband does not have sexual intercourse with her until he thinks she is ready for it and certainly not below the age of twelve."[38]

There are numerous causes for child marriage; Mathur and Malhotra highlight gender roles and lack of alternatives as one of the traits that triggers this practice.[39] According to these authors, gender roles are defined by culture; and as boys and girls

[34] Oluyemisi Bamgbose, "Legal and Cultural Approaches to Sexual Matters in Africa: the Cry of the Adolescent Girl," *University of Miami International and Comparative Law Review* 127. (2002), accessed January 10, 2011.

[35] International Humanist and Ethical Union. "Child Marriage: A Violation of Human Rights." April 23, 2007, accessed February 11, 2011, http://www.iheu.org/child-marriage-a-violation-of-human-rights.

[36] Carla Power, "Nujood Ali & Shada Nasser win 'Women of the Year Fund 2008 Glamour Award," *Yemen Times*, August 12, 2009, accessed February 16, 2011. http://www.yementimes.com/DefaultDET.aspx?i=1207&p=report&a=1.

[37] Bamgbose. "Legal and Cultural Approaches to Sexual Matters in Africa."

[38] Ibid.

[39] Sanyukta M. Mathur and G.A. Malhotra, "Too Young to Wed: The Lives, Rights, and Health of Young Married Girls," *International Center for Research on Women* (2003): 4.

experience life, they face numerous pressures they must adjust to. "In many societies, boys face social and cultural pressures during adolescence to succeed in school, prove their sexuality, engage in sports and physical activity, develop a social group of peers, and demonstrate their ability to shoulder household economic and financial responsibilities."[40] For boys, argue Mathur and Malhotra, these pressures seldom translate into child marriage. On the other hand, the social and cultural pressures that girl's experience leads them straight into the "marital state."[41] The image of what a girl is and how she should carry herself emphasizes domestic work, submission, and characteristics considered essential to being good wives and mothers.[42] "Getting married and bearing children are often the only means for young girls to secure identity and status in families and as adults in society."[43] Mathur and Malhotra add that the more essential the role of wife and mother is to women's identities, and the less social and economic activities presented as alternatives, the earlier girls are inclined to marry.

The Innocent Digest, on the other hand, argues that a key factor for child marriage is poverty.[44] Reports from the Population Council also show that child marriage is mostly practiced amongst people living in poverty.[45] In the case of Ethiopia, one of the poorest countries in the world and that has high cases of child marriage, girls marry as young as

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[40] Sanyukta M. Mathur and G.A. Malhotra, "Too Young to Wed: The Lives, Rights, and Health of Young Married Girls," *International Center for Research on Women* (2003): 4.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] UNICEF, "Early Marriage: Child Spouses," *Innocenti Digest* 7 (2001): 5, accessed February 9, 2011. http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest7e.pdf.
[45] The Population Council, "Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health: Charting Directions for a Second Generation of Programming," *The Population Council,* 2002, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/adolsrh.pdf.

seven years of age. [46] "Ethiopia is the site of some of the most abusive marital practices, such as marriage by abduction and forced union between cousins (abusuma)."[47] Child marriage is mostly practiced in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, countries that all share high levels poverty.[48] Diane P. Mines and Sarah E. Lamb hold that social and economic patterns of poor families show that girls are usually bound to household tasks while boys can study. Then, these same young girls are given to child marriage, which "works directly against keeping girls in school."[49]

  In addition to the many causes child marriage has, there are effects that Nawal M. Nour argues, should not be ignored.[50] She highlights that one of the beliefs that societies that practice child marriage have is that it is a way of protecting girls from promiscuity when in reality it harms young girls health. She continues explaining that married girls are more likely to become infected with STDs, in particular HIV and human papilloma virus (HPV), than unmarried girls. "In sub-Saharan Africa, girls ages 15–19 years are 2–8 times more likely than boys of the same age to become infected with HIV."[51] The risk of acquiring HIV from a single act of unprotected vaginal intercourse is 2–3 times greater for women than men. Globally, the prevalence of HIV infections among women is highest from ages 15 to 24; the risk for men peaks 5–10 years later.

[46] International Center for Research on Women. "Child Marriage Facts and Figures." Accessed January 11, 2011. http://www.icrw.org/child-marriage-facts-and-figures.
[47] The Population Council, "Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health: Charting Directions for a Second Generation of Programming," *The Population Council,* 2002, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/adolsrh.pdf.
[48] UNICEF. "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A Statistical exploration." *UNICEF.* 2005, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf.
[49] Diane P. Mines and Sarah E Lamb, *Everyday Life in South Asia* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2010.), 91.
[50] Nawal M. Nour, "Health Consequences of Child Marriage in Africa," *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, November 2006, accessed February 22, 2010, http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol12no11/06-0510.htm.
[51] Ibid.

Minja Kim Choe, Shyam Thapa, and Sulistinah Achmad conducted a research focused on early childbearing. They present early motherhood as a serious problem that harms the health of young girls, and claim that child marriage leads to early childbearing.[52] They argue that with childbearing, these young mothers are likely to experience higher levels of morbidity and mortality during infancy and early childhood. Their research focused on Asia confirmed that the less exposure children in rural areas have to education, the more prone they are to marriage and consequently to childbearing. Nour adds that the problem with children delivering children is that the young mothers are at a significantly higher risk than older women for debilitating illness and even death.[53] "Compared with women 20 years of age (and older), girls 10-14 years of age are 5-7 times more likely to die from childbirth, and girls 15-19 years of age are twice as likely."[54] As a recommendation, these researchers suggest that new programs that educate young girls about the high risks of infant mortality among children born to females under age 20 should be implemented as well as other health mediation programs. "Innovative programs designed for encouraging newly married couples to wait longer before having the first child should also be considered seriously."[55]

Robert Jensen and Rebecca Thornton explain in *Early female marriage in the developing world*, that amongst the disadvantages that girls who marry young suffer are: "less education, begin childrearing earlier, and have less decision-making power in household."[56] They use India as an example, where women who marry before the age of

[52] Minja Choe Kim, Shyam Thapa, and Sulistinah Achmad, "Early Marriage and Childbearing in Indonesia and Nepal." *East-West Center* 108 (2001): 3, accessed February 11, 2011.
[53] Nawal M. Nour, "Health Consequences of Child Marriage in Africa," *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, November 2006, accessed February 22, 2010, http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol12no11/06-0510.htm.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Kim, "Early Marriage and Childbearing in Indonesia and Nepal."
[56] Robert Jensen and Rebecca Thornton, "Early Female Marriage in the Developing World." *Gender and*

15 receive less than one year of education and those who marry between the ages of 16 and 20 receive less than two years. In contrast, Indian women whose marriage is delayed until after age 21 receive three to four years of education.[57] "Since marriage and schooling appear incompatible, child marriage is likely to be a significant barrier to women's education."[58] This point is shared in *Early marriage as a barrier to girl's education*. In this report, Jeannette Bayisenge states that mothers play an essential role in a child's life, especially when it refers to education. She explains that education is one of the most important investments that a country can make in its own future. "Education has a profound effect on girls and women's ability to claim other rights and achieve status in society, such as economic independence and political representation."[59] Bayisenge holds that education increases the changes of women finding well paid employments, the opportunity to raise a healthy family and prevents the spread of diseases such as HIV and AIDS. Expanding on child marriage and education, Mathur and Mahotra explain how research held in Nepal revealed that although parents would like their daughters to experience education, careers and delayed marriage "they find it difficult to go against social custom, which stigmatizes girls who break existing norms by engaging in activities that delay marriage and childbearing."[60]

Bayisenge explains how child marriage has a negative impact on girls all over the world, but also highlights how this practice affects society as a whole.[61] She presents child marriage as a developmental challenge. Bayisenge holds that this practice threatens

Development 11 (2003): 9.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Jeannette Bayisenge, "Early Marriage as a Barrier to Girl's Education: A Development Challenge in Africa," *National University of Rwanda* (2009): 3, accessed February 12, 2011.

[60] Sanyukta M. Mathur and G.A. Malhotra, "Too Young to Wed: The Lives, Rights, and Health of Young Married Girls," *International Center for Research on Women* (2003): 5.

[61] Bayisenge, "Early Marriage as a Barrier to Girl's Education."

the achievement of the first six goals of Millennium Development Goals: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primarily education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating HIV/AIDs, malaria and other diseases. "When the relationship between age at marriage and development is examined, it becomes clear that marriage is a precondition for the attainment of desired development goals."[62] A UNICEF report also argues that girls are not the only ones who pay for early marriage but that society is equally affected. Some of the growing burdens on society, as a result of child marriage are: population pressure, health care costs and lost opportunities of human development.[63] "A society cannot thrive if its youngest members are forced into early marriage, abused as sex workers or denied their basic rights."[64]

Bayisenge continues explaining that part of a successful adulthood involves the completion of school, receiving employment, "and attainment of skills and information related to the roles of citizen, family member, and consumer."[65] Malhotra and Mather add that there is a close link between delayed marriage and adult earnings. "Women's economic future and their ability to participation in and contribute to the global economy are primarily dependent on a rise in educational attainment, but this is impossible when the girl married early." [66] Women who marry at early age are likely to find the sole focus of their lives, at the expense of development in other areas such as formal education, and

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[62] Jeannette Bayisenge, "Early Marriage as a Barrier to Girl's Education: A Development Challenge in Africa," *National University of Rwanda* (2009): 9, accessed February 12, 2011.
[63] UNICEF. "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A Statistical exploration." *UNICEF*. 2005, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf.
[64] UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman had said at the report launch. Accessed February 11, 2010, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33928&Cr=india&Cr.
[65] Bayisenge, "Early Marriage as a Barrier to Girl's Education."
[66] Sanyukta M. Mathur and G.A. Malhotra, "Too Young to Wed: The Lives, Rights, and Health of Young Married Girls," *International Center for Research on Women* (2003): 5.

training for employment, work experience and personal growth. Early marriage can,

therefore, be a significant barrier for communities seeking to raise education levels and

break the cycle of poverty. Bayisenge argues that educating girls is one of the resources

to tackle poverty and developmental problems. "With education girls are given the

chance to choose their own futures and not one chosen by their parents and guardians."[67]

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[67] Jeannette Bayisenge, "Early Marriage as a Barrier to Girl's Education: A Development Challenge in Africa," *National University of Rwanda* (2009): 9, accessed February 12, 2011.

Chapter III-Child Marriage

<u>Child Marriage</u>

In order to learn how child marriage is affecting Niger, Yemen and Thailand, it is necessary to understand what it is. Tamo Mibang and M.C. Behera define marriage as a union of man and woman to establish the basic unit of a society: family. "The basic purpose of marriage is for procreation of children for continuation of society and also for fulfillment of biological needs and to develop social ties among members of society."[68] Child marriage, also known as early marriage or child bride, is essentially a marriage of a person under the age of 18.[69] An EPCAT publication adds to this definition that, "it is the marriage of a child to an adult or another child."[70] This practice is common in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. Marriage after puberty is common among some groups in Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, while in parts of Western and Eastern Africa, and Southern Asia some girls marry before puberty.[71] For the purpose of this thesis, as stated in the CRC, a child is one under the age of 18.

Andrea Parrot and Nina Cummings define child marriage as a form of forced marriage.[72] They argue that children lack the maturity to understand the nature of marital relationships, what is expected of them and in which ways early marriage affects them. An EPCAT publication also considers child marriages to be forced in most cases. The report states that, "forced marriage is strongly associated with child marriage because full and informed consent is absent or considered unnecessary when it comes to the marriage

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[68] Tamo Mibang and M.C. Behera, *Marriage and Culture: Reflections from Tribal Societies of Arunachal Pradesh* (India: Mittal Publications, 2006), 440.

[69] UNICEF, "Early Marriage: Child Spouses," *Innocenti Digest* 7 (2001): 2, accessed February 9, 2011. http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest7e.pdf.

[70] ECPAT International, "Child Marriage," accessed March 12, 2011, http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Csec_marriage.asp.

[71] UNICEF. "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A Statistical exploration." *UNICEF*. 2005, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf.

[72] Andrea Parrot and Nina Cummings. *Sexual Enslavement of Girls and Women Worldwide* (Conneticutt: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008), 58.

of a child."[73] Andrea Parrot and Nina Cummings differentiate forced marriage from

arranged marriage by explaining that forced marriages involve coercion, mental and

emotional abuse and strong social pressure. "In the most extreme cases, it may also

involve physical violence, abduction, false imprisonment, rape or sexual abuse and

murder."[74] On the other hand, these authors hold that arranged marriages usually only

involve the agreements of all parts of the marital union, including the children.[75] An

example of this is an engagement ceremony celebrated by two Syrian families who

claimed that their 5-year-old boy and a 3-year-old girl were in love. Both families

explained that their children fell in love the day they met in the port city of Latakia,

Syria. The parents arranged an engagement ceremony, where their 5-year-old boy

proposed to the 3-year-old girl. The parents told news reporters that the children were in

love and were planning a wedding that would be celebrated in 10 years, when the boy

would be 15 and the girl 12. The boy's dad stated, "I vowed to have my child engaged at

the age of five if he was a boy and to marry him to a woman of his choice at the age of

15."[76] The news article explains that although Syria is not listed as one of the top

countries that practice child marriage, it is known for traditionally arranged marriages of

young boys and girls. It is tradition for the boy's female relatives to begin searching for a

suitable wife once he reaches puberty.[77] The girl is generally a few years younger than

him. "If prospects are limited, a matchmaker is hired and together they go knocking on

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[73] ECPAT International, "Forced Marriage," accessed March 12, 2011,
http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Csec_forced.asp.
[74] Andrea Parrot and Nina Cummings. *Sexual Enslavement of Girls and Women Worldwide* (Conneticutt: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008), 58.
[75] Ibid.
[76] George Baghdadl. "Syrian Boy, 5, Engaged Girlfriend, 3." *CBS News,* October 25, 2010, accessed November 14, 2010. http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503543_162-20020554-503543.htmlo.
[77] Ibid.

the doors of nearby homes and ask: "Do you have girls for marriage"?[78] In countries like Syria, child marriage is justified by the affirmation that Islamic law permits these marital unions as well as many tribal leaders.[79]

Child marriages are arranged in various ways. Not all arranged or forced marriages take the form of child marriage but all child marriages are either arranged or forced. In most cases girls are arranged to marry men over twice their age. Boys, on the other hand, are generally married to girls a couple of years younger than them. Since children are under the care of adults, their marriages are agreed upon by third parties, generally between the girl's parents and the future husband. If it becomes difficult for the parent to find a husband for their daughter, they request the assistance of a "matchmaker."

When marriages between two children are arranged, the agreement is fixed between the families. They wait until the children reach adolescence to celebrate the wedding, similar to the Syrian children example. The children live with their respective families until the wedding. Once the children are married, they often go to live with the husband's family. In cases where the girl is given in marriage to an older man, she goes to live with her husband sometimes before reaching puberty. It is believed that the girl is to be raised by her husband and his family. There are many assumptions that surround the practice of having the young girl live with her husband before puberty. One of the assumptions is that it marks the transition from being a child to becoming a woman, even

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[78] George Baghdadl. "Syrian Boy, 5, Engaged Girlfriend, 3." *CBS News,* October 25, 2010, accessed November 14, 2010. http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503543_162-20020554-503543.htmlo.
[79] Ibid.

though the young girl is under the age of 18.[80] Moreover, some cultural beliefs hold that

when the young wife lives with her husband, she will become attached to him. "There is

the unjustified belief that a child bride comes to learn and venerate her husband from a

very early age and will become firmly attached to him as she grows older."[81] Bamgbose

challenges this belief by arguing that the increase of girls requesting divorce and escaping

from the abuse and other situations they experience, demonstrates that this idea fails to

hold true. Instead of drawing the young wife towards her husband, the violence and

situation they are in draw these girls towards the opposite direction.[82]

The age at which a child is exchanged in marriage varies, usually fluctuating from

infancy to adolescence. In some cases, although few, children enter into marriage

agreements before they are born. Since the variations in the practice of child marriage

mentioned above involve the marriage of very young children, it is important to highlight

that not all marriages involve sexual relations between spouses. "All of the marriages,

however, do determine children's eventual sexual partners, and essentially their sexual

relations."[83] Men married to girls that have not yet reached puberty are not allowed to

have sexual intercourse with her until she reaches adolescence or he believes that she is

mature enough. Parents at times make their sons-in-law promise not to engage in sexual

relations with their daughters until she reaches adolescence. In some countries the law

also prohibits sexual intercourse until the girl is physically mature. This maturity can be

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[80] UNICEF. "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A Statistical exploration." *UNICEF*. 2005, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf.
[81] Oluyemisi Bamgbose, "Legal and Cultural Approaches to Sexual Matters in Africa: the Cry of the Adolescent Girl," *University of Miami International and Comparative Law Review* 127. (2002), accessed January 10, 2011.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Roger J. R. Levesque, *Sexual Abuse of Children: A Human Rights Perspective* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999), 129.

confirmed through the girls' demonstration of responsibility in household duties,

commencement of menstruation, and emotional strength.[84]

Even though child marriage includes both boys and girls, girls are known to be

the main victims of this harmful practice. Statistics reflect higher percentages of girls

involved in this practice than boys.[85] Many societies consider adolescence as the

beginning of opportunities for boys where for girls it represents less "opportunity and

personal freedom."[86] Because these girls are subordinated to older men who are stronger

and usually exercise their power, boys are less likely (in the context of child marriage) to

be as exploited or physically harmed than girls are.[87] The gap between the amounts of

boys and girls involved in child marriage displays a problem of gender equality.

UNICEF indicates that child marriage is mostly practiced in communities were both

poverty and gender inequality are prevalent.[88] Both boys and girls should benefit from

the freedom to enjoy their childhood and marry at an age where they are mature enough

to decide. But the search for equality is not feasible when choice is not even an

alternative.

There are many reasons why parents resort to marring their daughters at a young

age. Some of these reasons are cultural and others are direct responses to poverty. Many

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[84] Oluyemisi Bamgbose, "Legal and Cultural Approaches to Sexual Matters in Africa: the Cry of the Adolescent Girl," *University of Miami International and Comparative Law Review* 127. (2002), accessed January 10, 2011.

[85] In Niger, the percentage of boys practicing child marriage is 5% while in girls the percentage is 70. (Ibid.).

[86] UNICEF. "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A Statistical exploration." *UNICEF*. 2005, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Mary Ellsberg et al., "From Behind the Scenes to the Forefront: Gender Equality, Social Institutions and the Millennium Development Goals" (ECOSOC panel discussion, United Nations Headquarters, July 1, 2010).

of the families that practice child marriage live in poverty.[89] In cases where girls are

given in marriage to older men, the family selects the man who possesses the means to

pay the demanded dowries.[90] Often times, these families have many children and lack the

resources to support their household. In order to assure that their daughters are taken care

of, parents give their young ones in marriage. In this, they believe that their daughters

will be provided for and it also reduces the family's expenses. Culture, on the other

hand, plays a huge role in the practice of child marriage. Since this practice is

predominant in rural areas, these communities tend to have a set of rules and customs that

the social group will then agree on and exercise. These customs are passed on from one

generation to another and usually are overlooked by the government. In the case of child

marriage, governments are usually unaware of specific cases because most of the children

in rural areas are not registered. Consequently, even if local laws stipulate a minimum

age for marriage it is urgent to inform and educate the population in these rural areas. If

not educated properly, this practice will prevail.

Child marriage as a traditional practice

A report published by the International Women's Health Coalition presents

another perspective on how force plays into child marriage. They state that in addition to

force being inflicted on children, at times parents may feel forced by cultural traditions or

poverty to resort to child marriage.[91] Each culture holds firmly to their particular beliefs

and abide to distinct practices. Sometimes the fidelity to traditional practices stems from

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[89] UNICEF. "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A Statistical exploration." *UNICE.* 2005, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf.
[90] Dowry in this context is a sum of money required in exchange for a young bride.
[91] International Women's Health Coalition. "Child Marriage: Girls 14 and Younger At Risk." June 2008, accessed January 13, 2011,
http://www.iwhc.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3487&Itemid=629

real convictions, other times it is a response to fear of rejection or punishment. The

Innocent Digest reports that the practice of child marriage will vary depending "on a

society's view of the family – its role, structure, pattern of life, and the individual and

collective responsibilities of its members."[92] The idea of what family is and its function

will vary from country to country as well as the different tribes within a country. For

instance, Ursula Ebenhöh explains that throughout Western Europe and North America's

history, marriages have taken place later in life.[93] "Because women and men marry as

adults with experience of life, it is alien to accept unquestioningly a parental choice of

spouse."[94] On the other hand, amongst some groups in Asia, the Middle East, and North

Africa marriage after puberty is common; in parts of Western and Eastern Africa, and

Southern Asia some girls marry before puberty.[95]

Marriage, viewed from a general perspective, is traditionally a celebrated event.

Family and friends reunite to celebrate the couple that is assumed to be in love. This

general perspective is far from accurate in cultures where force, blackmail, and abuse are

exercised in order to achieve martial unions. For many girls, marriage has negative

implications. Marriage is practiced differently in many cultures and therefore has diverse

connotations. In some cultures, the norm is to have more than one wife while in others

this represents an offense. There are communities that celebrate child marriage as a valid

and positive practice.[96] A research on child marriage in Indonesia and Nepal revealed that

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[92] UNICEF, "Early Marriage: Child Spouses," *Innocenti Digest* 7 (2001): 5, accessed February 9, 2011. http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest7e.pdf.
[93] Ursula Ebenhöh, *Family History: Historical Changes and Regional Differences on that what is called "family"* (Germany: GRIN Verlag, 2004), 6.
[94] UNICEF, "Early Marriage: Child Spouses."
[95] UNICEF. "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A Statistical exploration." *UNICEF*. 2005, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf.
[96] Susanne Louis B. Mikhail, "Child Marriage and Child Prostitution: Two Forms of Sexual Exploitation," *Gender and Development* 10 (2002): 43.

the social group that had the highest amounts of child marriage cases was the most traditional among the other provinces.[97] This demonstrates how deep child marriage is rooted in cultural values.

The understanding that cultures have about family is very important because marriage is usually where family begins. Most cultures, if not all, that practice child marriage value the girl's virginity. Since virginity is valued within the culture, the natural disposition of the families is to conform and make sure that their daughters are virgins when given in marriage. Child marriage then becomes a way of preventing girls from initiating sexual relations before marriage or with unknown men.[98] Parents believe that marrying off their daughters at a young age is a way of protecting them, protecting them from the consequences of disobedience. The consequences of disobedience can take form of disinheritance, abandonment or physical harm. "They [the girls] often do not know whom to turn to and where to find help. They are afraid that their 'disobedience' will be punished, because they have violated the honor of the family."[99] The fears that surround these girls are triggered by their vulnerability and sense of hopelessness. The honor attached to this practice has traditionally been linked to its central purpose, which is to assure virginity at the time of marriage.[100] In many African cultures, parents of a virgin

[97] Minja Choe Kim, Shyam Thapa and Sulistinah Achmad, "Early Marriage and Childbearing in Indonesia and Nepal," *East-West Center* 108 (2001): 9, accessed February 11, 2011.
[98] Ibid., 6.
[99] European Parliament,"Justice, Freedom and Security: Forced Marriages and Honour Killings," Directorate General for Internal Policies. 2008, accessed February 10, 2011.
[100] Susanne Louis B. Mikhail, "Child Marriage and Child Prostitution: Two Forms of Sexual Exploitation," *Gender and Development* 10 (2002): 43.

bride are rewarded with gifts and the virgin is valued by her husband and honored by his family.[101]

In addition to the social group's perception of family, gender roles are an important trait that triggers child marriage.[102] Gender roles are defined by culture. The roles that social groups assign to boys and girls are ones that must be respected by the group. This embodies a certain amount of pressure that participants must abide by. "In many societies, boys face social and cultural pressures during adolescence to succeed in school, prove their sexuality, engage in sports and physical activity, develop a social group of peers, and demonstrate their ability to shoulder household economic and financial responsibilities."[103] The pressures for boys seldom translate into child marriage. On the other hand, the social and cultural pressures that girl's experience leads them straight into the "marital state."[104] The image of what a girl is and how she should carry herself emphasizes domestic work, submission, and characteristics considered essential to being good wives and mothers.[105] "Getting married and bearing children are often the only means for young girls to secure identity and status in families and as adults in society."[106] Mathur and Malhotra add that the more essential the role of wife and mother is to women's identities, and the less social and economic activities presented as alternatives, the earlier girls are inclined to marry. In summary, "poverty, protection of girls, fear of loss of virginity before marriage and related family honor, and the provision

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[101] Oluyemisi Bamgbose, "Legal and Cultural Approaches to Sexual Matters in Africa: the Cry of the Adolescent Girl," *University of Miami International and Comparative Law Review* 127. (2002), accessed January 10, 2011.
[102] Sanyukta M. Mathur and G.A. Malhotra, *Too Young to Wed: The Lives, Rights, and Health of Young Married Girls*. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). Washington, D.C. 2003. p. 4.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.

of stability during unstable social periods are suggested as significant factors in determining a girl's risk of becoming married as a child."[107]

<u>Child marriage and international law</u>

Marriage laws and its practice will vary from country to country. In many cases, national laws legally condone the practice of child marriage.[108] According to CRC, a child is a person under 18, unless national laws recognize the age of majority earlier.[109] At the same time, the CRC charges states with the responsibility of creating local laws that protect children.[110] While marriage is not mentioned directly in the CRC, child marriage does violate a set of other rights considered in the CRC such as: the right to express their views freely, the right to protection from all forms of abuse, and the right to be protected from harmful traditional practices. A UNICEF report states that there are paradoxes and legal contradictions in the tradition of child marriage.[111] "While consensual sex with girls below a minimum age constitutes statutory rape, the same act with a similar aged girl goes unsanctioned by the protective mantle of "marriage."[112]

The Convention on the Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage[113] requires its state parties to take legislative action to stipulate a minimum age for marriage. Once established, no marriage should be legally entered into by any person under that age, "except where a competent authority has granted a

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[107] International Humanist and Ethical Union. "Child Marriage: A Violation of Human Rights." April 23, 2007, accessed February 11, 2011, http://www.iheu.org/child-marriage-a-violation-of-human-rights.
[108] ECPAT International, "Child Marriage," accessed March 12, 2011, http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Csec_marriage.asp.
[109] UN General Assembly, "Convention on the Rights of the Child," *United Nations,* 1989. Art 1.
[110] Ibid.
[111] UNICEF. "Child Marriage and the Law: legislative reform initiative paper series." *Division of Policy and Planning.* January 2008, accessed February 1, 2011, http://www.unicef.org/policyanalysis/files/Child_Marriage_and_the_Law%281%29.pdf.
[112] Ibid.
[113] The Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage, and Registration of Marriages was a treaty agreed on in the United Nations about the standards of marriage. The treaty was ratified on November 1962 and entered into force on December 9, 1964.

dispensation as to age, for serious reasons, in the interest of the intending spouses."[114] The Convention also commands state parties to eliminate the marriage of girls under the age of puberty. The preamble of this Convention refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the General Assembly Resolution 843, which acknowledges the existence of cultural practices that violate women's rights and calls states to establish national laws that protect women. The preface of the Convention on the Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage reads:

> Reaffirming that all States, including those which have or assume responsibility for the administration of Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories until their achievement of independence, should take all appropriate measures with a view to abolishing such customs, ancient laws and practices by ensuring, inter alia, complete freedom in the choice of a spouse, eliminating completely child marriages and the betrothal of young girls before the age of puberty, establishing appropriate penalties where necessary and establishing a civil or other register in which all marriages will be recorded.[115]

Article 16 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes that:

> (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

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[114] UN General Assembly, "Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage, and Registration of Marriages," *United Nations,* 1962. Art. 2.
[115] Ibid., Preface.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.[116]

More than two decades after the Convention on Marriage was established, the CRC was created to focus on the specific needs that concern children. Child marriage disregards numerous rights granted by the CRC such as: the right to education (Article 28); the right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, including sexual abuse (Article 19) and from all forms of sexual exploitation (Article 34); the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24); the right to educational and vocational information and guidance (Article 28); the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas (Article 13); the right to rest and leisure, and to participate freely in cultural life (Article 31); the right to not be separated from their parents against their will (Article 9); and, the right to protection against all forms of exploitation affecting any aspect of the child's welfare (Article 36).[117]

In addition to international law, there are development initiatives that have been created to tackle the many challenges that threaten the improvement of poor countries. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are an example. The purpose of the MDGs is to promote social and economic development in the world's poorest countries. Child marriage has a negative impact on girls as individuals but also affects society as a

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[116] UN General Assembly, "Universal Declaration on Human Rights," *United Nations,* 1948. Art. 16.
[117] Judith Bruce, "Married Adolescent Girls: Human Rights, Health and Developmental Needs of a Neglected Majority," *United Nations Special Session on Children.* (2003): 4378.

whole.[118] Bayisenge presents child marriage as a developmental challenge and argues that child marriage threatens the achievement of the first six goals of MDGs: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primarily education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating HIV/AIDs, malaria and other diseases. "When the relationship between age at marriage and development is examined, it becomes clear that marriage is a precondition for the attainment of desired development goals."[119]

Many countries have raised the minimum age of marriage to 15, which still is a very young age to marry. In practice, laws do not obtain compliance from isolated communities that follow their own norms. The implementations of laws fall short without reaching out to the communities that practice child marriage. Regulations can be stipulated but do not necessarily mirror a desired social behavior. For this reason, law along with the work of advocates can make an actual difference. Both of these aspects are crucial in the elimination of child marriage and other harmful traditional practices.

Child marriage around the globe

Over the last 30 years, child marriage has decreased globally. This change has been a gradual progress but the practice still remains very common in rural areas and among poor communities. If rural areas are not educated on this topic, it is estimated that 100 million girls will marry over the next decade. This translates into "25,000 girls married every day for the next 10 years."[120] Child marriage is mostly practiced in

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[118] Jeannette Bayisenge, "Early Marriage as a Barrier to Girl's Education: A Development Challenge in Africa," *National University of Rwanda* (2009): 3, accessed February 12, 2011.
[119] Ibid.
[120] International Center for Research on Women. "Child Marriage Facts and Figures," accessed January 11, 2011, http://www.icrw.org/child-marriage-facts-and-figures.

Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.[121] In Southern Asia 48 percent of the girls are

married before they reach 18. In Africa, 42 percent of girls are married before turning 18

and in Latin America and the Caribbean, 29 percent of girls are married by age 18.[122]

In many cultures, the age in which women first marry is a reflection of her social,

educational, and economic status. At the same time, marrying at a young age has

significant implications for a women's reproductive health especially in regards to

childbearing. According to research conducted by William H. Markle et al., the pressure

that is inflicted by the social expectancy to give birth soon after marriage lead women to

become pregnant before they are physically developed to carry a child. "In many

developing countries, between 50 percent and 75 percent of all births to married women

occur less than 2 years after the women enter their first union." [123] These statistics reveal

that soon after marriage, young girls engaged in child marriage are most likely to become

pregnant. From childbearing at a young age stems a great number of health risks for a

young woman and for her child. The International Planned Parenthood Federation argues

that there is a strong correlation between the age of the mother and maternal mortality.[124]

In the regions where child marriage is mostly practiced the maternal mortality are very

high. In Sub-Saharan Africa, during 2008 there were 204,000 maternal deaths. Out of

100,000 live births, 640 mothers die in Sub-Saharan Africa while 720 in West and

Central Africa. In South Asia, another country where child marriage is predominant,

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[121] UNICEF. "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A Statistical exploration." *UNICEF*. 2005, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf.
[122] William H. Markle, Melanie A. Fisher and Raymond A. Smego, *Understanding Global Health.* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 64.
[123] Ibid.
[124] UNFPA and International Parenthood Planning Foundation. "Ending Child Marriage: A Guide for Global Policy Action." IPPF. Sep 2006, accessed February 10, 2011, http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf.

109,000 mothers died in 2008.[125] The CIA infant mortality rate country comparison

summary situates Angola, Afghanistan, Niger, Mali, Somalia, Mozambique, Central

African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Chad and Nigeria as the top ten countries with the

highest rates of infant mortality occurrences. All these countries, except for Afghanistan

form part of Sub-Sahara Africa. Out of 1,000 live births, 178.13 infants under one year

of age died in Angola in 2010.[126] During the last decade, Chad has not had any declines

in infant mortality; it has remained in the same rate since 2000.[127] These statistics

confirm that girls are not physically, psychologically, and sexually mature enough for

marriage yet alone to give birth.[128] Good prenatal care can reduce the risk of childbirth

complications, but due to lack of freedom and information, young wives have no access

to health services, which exacerbates the risks of maternal complications and mortality.

"Because young girls are not ready for the responsibilities and roles of being a wife,

sexual partner and a mother, child marriage has a serious negative impact on their

psychological well-being and personal development."[129]

    If young mothers survive childbirth, many experience other health issues such as

fistula. Fistulas are vaginal ruptures that can occur when the pressure of childbirth tears a

hole between the vagina and the bladder or rectum with childbearing.[130] Medical experts

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[125] UNICEF. "Statistics by Area: Maternal Mortality." *UNICEF*. 2008, accessed March 15, 2011, http://www.childinfo.org/maternal_mortality_countrydata.php.
[126] CIA. "Country Comparision: Infant Mortality Rate 2010." *CIA. The World Factbook*, last modified November 9, 2010, accessed February 13, 2011, http://cs.fit.edu/~ryan/factbook/factbook/rankorder/2091rank.html?countryName=Jordan&countryCode=jo&regionCode=me&rank=109#jo.
[127] UNICEF. "Statistics by Area: Child Survival and Health." *UNICEF*. September 2009, accessed February 12, 2011, http://www.childinfo.org/mortality_imrcountrydata.php.
[128] UNICEF. "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A Statistical exploration." *UNICEF*. 2005, accessed November 18, 2010, http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf.
[129] International Humanist and Ethical Union. "Child Marriage: A Violation of Human Rights." April 23, 2007, accessed February 11, 2011, http://www.iheu.org/child-marriage-a-violation-of-human-rights.
[130] Trisha Anest, "US medical students' knowledge of obstetric fistula in developing countries." (PhD diss., The University of Texas School of Public Health, 2009).

estimate that at least 2 million women around the world live with appalling vaginal and anal ruptures.[131] Fistulas that go untreated can lead to death, and survivors are usually left incontinent for life.[132] In Nigeria approximately 800,000 women suffer from fistula.[133] Kees Waaldijk, a chief consultant surgeon at the world's largest fistula clinic[134] states that girls, "marry young, they get pregnant young, they deliver young and they pick up the fistula."[135] He explains that most cases occur to young girls during their first pregnancy, and close to half the patients in his hospital are under 16.[136]

In addition to health implications, child marriage has a negative impact on young girls in many other ways. Motherhood for young girls often restrains them from education, employment, and personal growth. William H. Markle et al., hold that child marriage is often associated with higher probability of divorce and separation. "With the dissolution of marriage, women face economic and social challenges because they usually assume full responsibility for dependent family members."[137] Although any abuse that occurred during the marriage terminates with divorce, there are serious consequences that girls have to face. This will be studied closer in the case studies.

The next chapter examines Niger as the first of three case studies that are considered in this thesis. It provides a perspective on the situation children in Niger are found, supported by statistics and analysis. Also, in order to understand in what ways

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[131] Paul Salopek, "The bride was 7 in the heart of Ethopia, child marriage takes a brutal toll," *Chicago Tribune,* December 12, 2004, accessed February 16, 2011. http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-0412120360dec12,0,6964856.story.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ramita Naval, "Broken lives: Nigeria's child brides who end up on the streets," *The Times*, November 28, 2008, accessed February 12, 2011.
http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/africa/article5248224.ece.
[134] Babbar Ruga Hospital in Nigeria.
[135] Naval, "Broken lives."
[136] Ibid.
[137] William H. Markle, Melanie A. Fisher and Raymond A. Smego, *Understanding Global Health.* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 64.

child marriages affect the lives of young girls, the next chapter intends to provide a

sharper perspective by providing personal stories. These are true stories that describe how

the futures of these young girls are all of a sudden shadowed by what should be a positive

experience in life.

Chapter IV-Niger

<u>Niger</u>

There are many aspects to take into consideration when analyzing a country's

social behavior. Traditional practices are diverse and distinct to each social group or

tribe. For this reason it is important to understand that there are beliefs and norms within

social groups that may vary from country to country. The purpose of this chapter is to

examine how child marriage is practiced in Niger. Niger is one of the three case studies

for this thesis because it has the highest incidents of child marriage in the world.[138] This

chapter presents general African beliefs on marriage and family, which may encourage

the central viewpoints that frame the traditional practice of child marriage in Niger. In

addition to providing an African cultural perspective, this chapter intends to demonstrate

how child marriage is affecting the Nigerien population by reviewing news articles. As

mentioned before, because child marriage is practiced in rural areas where most

marriages go unregistered it is difficult to attain accurate statistics that reflect the urgency

to abolish this practice. However, current news articles about child marriage put into

perspective the cultural, social and global repercussions of this practice.

<u>African views on family and marriage</u>

In most African societies, motherhood is viewed as the essential goal of

marriage. For instance, the Ibibio society considers a women's ability to bear many

children an important aspect of what is considered family.[139] "Motherhood brings status,

prestige, and new authority within the home and society."[140] Since the vital goal of

marriage is motherhood, soon after marriage women are expected to start bearing

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[138] UNICEF, "Early Marriage: Child Spouses," *Innocenti Digest* 7 (2001): 4, accessed February 9, 2011.
http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest7e.pdf.
[139] Caroline Sweetman, *Gender, Development and Marriage* (United Kingdom: Oxfam GB, 2003), 71.
[140] Ibid.

children for her husband and his family. Therefore, a barren woman is considered a great disappointment to her husband, his family, and her family. Marriage and procreation is not only valued in African societies, this traditional belief is shared in many world cultures. Several cultures promote marriage and procreation, which does not pose a problem. The problem lies in the age these girls are given into marriage and the use of force and manipulation in order to prevent them from rebelling against the practice.

Daniel Etounga-Manguelle explains how the sense of community dominates the individual in the African culture. He explains that people who form part of a social group are subordinated to the norms of the community. Hence, the thought of individuality or any behavior that shies away from community is unacceptable.

The African is vertically rooted in his family, in the vital ancestor, if not in God; horizontally he is linked to his group, to society, to the cosmos. The fruit of a family-individual, society-individual dynamic, all linked to the universe, the African can only develop and bloom through social and family life.[141]

The identity of the individual is found in communal life. For this reason, everything they do conforms to the norms that benefit the community as a whole instead of the individual. Etounga-Manguelle states that individual rights are necessary in every society, but the African culture tends to avoid confrontation. Despite all the violence that occurs in this continent, this author argues that Africans' passivity is driven by their fear of authority (chief of the tribes).[142]

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[141] Daniel Etounga-Manguelle, "Does Africa Need a Cultural Adjustment Program?" in *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progres*, ed Lawrence E. Harrison et al. (New York: Basic, 2000), 71.
[142] Ibid.

Ambe J. Njoh claims that European and Western colonial authorities as well as missionaries influenced African tradition and cultural practices. At that time, these foreign powers believed that African culture represented an obstacle for development efforts.[143] "African tradition and cultural practices would have proved more beneficial to contemporary development efforts in Africa were it not for so-called modernization efforts that were initiated during the colonial era."[144] Njoh explains how family has always been the fundamental unit of financial production. The entire household would work together in the family farm and sell their products in order to sustain the family. Along with the arrival of colonial power came the alteration of these cultural structures. The colonial authorities assigned different tasks to the family members. This laid the foundation for "the gender-based socio-economic disparities prevalent in contemporary sub-Saharan African economies."[145] According to Njoh, men were the only ones designated to work in the colonial government service while women had to prepare and sell food to formal sector workers. Men were also hired for mining jobs. Most of the mining fields were located in remote areas, which required these men to be away from their families for prolonged periods of time. The mining facilities had single bedrooms equipped to satisfy the workers basic needs. This gave rise to prostitution and was associated with the colonial economic development policies. Njoh highlights how prostitution discriminated against women and disregarded the African traditional value of family and marriage.[146]

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[143] Ambe J. Njoh, *Tradition, Culture and Development in Africa: Historical Lessons for Modern* (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 62.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.

Missionaries also played an important role in the influence of traditional practices in Africa. According to Njoh, missionaries swayed Africans to convert to Christianity. With this conversion came the abandonment of their customs. For example, many African cultures practiced polygamy. Missionaries considered polygamy disgraceful and taught that monogamy was the best way to practice marriage. Njoh explains that polygamy was practiced in the African culture for various reasons. Most of which are direct responses to social and economic development. First, marriage, in most cases, is socially desired in African culture. Njoh states that since there are more women available for marriage than men, polygamy becomes a method for assuring marriage to the many marriageable women in society. "Polygamy can be seen as a strategy that is socially necessary not only to ensure the continuation of society, but also provide for needs of the many marriageable women who would otherwise not enjoy the status and benefits concomitant with marriage."[147] Another justification provided for polygamy is the fundamental role that procreation plays in marital life. A man with various wives increases his chances of having many children as well as conceiving a boy, which is highly valued in African cultures. Big families translate into more hands available to work in the family farm for production and stimulate economic development.[148] Therefore, polygamy is primarily practiced for economic reasons.[149]

Niger is ethnically diverse with groups coming from North African Arab nations, as well as groups in West African nations. The Hausa are the largest ethnic group in Niger, which makes up 56 percent of the population, followed by the Djerma at 22

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[147] Ambe J. Njoh, *Tradition, Culture and Development in Africa: Historical Lessons for Modern* (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 62.

[148] Ester Boserup, "The Economics of Polygamy," in *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History and Representation,* ed. Roy Grinker et al. (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010), 390.

[149] Ibid.

percent.[150] Then there are smaller groups such as: the Fula (Fulani) 8.5 percent; Tuareg,

8 percent; Beri Beri (Kanouri) 4.3 percent; Arabs, Toubou, and Gourmantche 1.2 percent;

and about 4,000 French expatriates.[151] The Fulani clan is comprised of nomadic peoples

throughout western Africa. They are known to be influential in regional politics,

economics, and histories. The Islamic religion is predominantly practiced within this

group.[152] Among Fulani groups, marriages are sometimes arranged before the child is

born. They believe that early arrangements strengthen the relationship between the

families. It also allows the children to get to know each other as they grow up together.[153]

Another reason for this tradition is that families feel pregnancies out of marriage are

disgraceful and a dishonor to the family and community.[154]

There are various views on marriage and family that are valued in the African

culture and its practice will vary in the many different societies within this large

continent. The value that a social group places on marriage and family will be reflected

on its traditional practices. The consideration of these general views on marriage serves

as a guide to introduce the topic of child marriage in Niger.

Child marriage in Niger

There are three statistics that are very important when examining child marriage

in Niger: adolescent fertility rate, maternal mortality and infant mortality. As studied in

the chapter on child marriage, girls who enter into this practice are more likely to get

pregnant soon after marriage. Since these young girls are not physically developed to

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[150] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza and Dickson Eyoh, "African History," *Encyclopedia of twentieth-century African History* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 228.
[151] David Levinson, *Ethnic Groups Worldwide: A Ready Reference Handbook* (Arizona: The Oryx Press, 1998), 155.
[152] Zeleza, "African History."
[153] UNICEF. "At a glance: Niger." *UNICEF*. October 7, 2004, accessed January 12, 2011, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/niger_1420.html.
[154] Ibid.

carry a child, yet alone give birth, the rates of mother and child mortality are very high.

According to the World Health Organization, the fertility[155] rate of adolescents age 15-19

in Niger is 199 in 1000 births.[156] The CIA indicates that Niger is the country with the

highest fertility rates in the world. Statistics published by the CIA also situate Niger as

the third country with the highest rates of infant mortality in the world.

These statistics are very significant as they reveal the status of women in Niger.

Juzhong Zhuang states that statistics provides enough information to know the status of

women in a country. She highlights three indicators that adolescent fertility rates

provide: high morality rates of women and their children; lack of education; and less

opportunity for personal development. "Adolescent pregnancy tends to have a higher

probability of being unplanned and untimely, and hence carries a higher risk of mortality

for both the mother and child."[157] In addition to mortality risks, young mothers tend to

abandon their education undermining women empowerment.[158] All the disadvantages

that child marriage represents for young girls perpetuate the cycle of poverty. Rob

Bowden and Rosie Wilson state that there is a continuous increase of African families

moving from rural areas to the city. They explain how rural areas were known for

families living very close to each other but now opt for the city life. "As more Africans

move to cities and leave traditional societies behind, women are giving birth to fewer

children."[159] Africans may be moving from rural areas for many reasons. The fact that

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[155] Fertility rate of a country is the same as pregnancy rate.
[156] World Health Organization. "Niger Country Profile. Department of Making Pregnancy Safer," accessed February 2, 2011, http://www.who.int/making_pregnancy_safer/countries/nie.pdf.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Juzhong Zhuang, *Poverty, Inequality, and Inclusive Growth in Asia: Measurement, Policy Issues, and Country Studies* (Philippines: Athem Press and Asian Development Bank, 2010), 127.
[159] Rob Bowden and Rosie Wilson, *African Culture* (Chicago: Capstone Global Library, LLC, 2010), 18.

their practices are shifting along with the reallocation suggests a desire for a lifestyle focused on personal development.

Child marriage is mostly practiced in the south of Niger. According to an article published by humanitarian news and analysis serviced by the United Nations, IRIN, the practice of child marriage is "changing in Niger from a village tradition to a cross-border business transaction."[160] This article explains how families in the north of Niger have found a way to alleviate their economic responsibilities by selling their daughters to men from neighboring countries. Northern Niger is one of the country's poorest regions. It has been a commercially strategic area and has problems of illegal immigration. "Poverty is at the root of the problem, families are worse off now, with the food crisis and everything. These marriages are like sales, trafficking. It's a form of prostitution."[161] The practice of child marriage is turning into an industry to the point where there are local businesses arranging marriages for men from Nigeria or northern African countries.[162] "They are like matrimonial agencies. There's a guy who looks for the girls and sends clients their photo via the Internet. The men send gifts for the girl and then the fixer talks to the family to arrange the marriage."[163] These girls are still in school and their parents sell them to unknown men jeopardizing their safety. An Agadez[164] parent claims that child marriage prevents their daughters from dishonoring the family by getting pregnant before marriage. "I'd rather marry my daughters to whomever rather than to have them picking up unwanted pregnancies in the streets of Agadez. Marriage is the 'sunna'

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[160] IRIN, "Niger: Early marriage – from rural custom to urban business," *IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis from Africa, Asia and the Middle East,* January 16, 2009, accessed January 23, 2011. http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82419.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Agadez is the largest city in northern Niger.

[practice] of the Prophet Mohamed."[165] Some Muslims justify the practice of child marriage as a spiritual act by comparing it with Mohamed marrying a nine-year-old child.

<u>Role of the government and NGOs</u>

In Niger, a girl can legally marry at 15. There have been legal proposals to increase the minimum age to 18, but it does not go beyond a request. An Agadez judge, Seyna Saidou, holds that even if the minimum age to marry changed, local customs often undermine laws. "The problem with marriage in Niger is that it's governed by customs, which allow parents to marry their girls to whomever they want and at any age."[166] An official at the Niger Embassy, Amadou Sounna, adds that Niger's government is "in the battle against child marriage, recognizing the terrible consequences it can have, especially for the health of girls." He assures that advocacy groups in Niger work against this harmful practice through information campaigns and programs tailored towards keeping girls in school.[167]

Child marriage is a real problem that contributes to other situations that affect children. An example of this is human trafficking. As mentioned earlier, parents consider selling their own children as an option to ease the agony of poverty. According to the Trafficking of Persons Report, Niger is a transit country for children and women from Benin, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, and Togo en route to Northern Africa and Western Europe.[168] "To a lesser extent, Nigerien women and children are

[165] IRIN, "Niger: Early marriage – from rural custom to urban business," *IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis from Africa, Asia and the Middle East,* January 16, 2009, accessed January 23, 2011. http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82419.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Barbara Slavin, "Child marriages rife in nations getting U.S. aid," *USAToday,* July 17, 2007, accessed February 9, 2011. http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2007-07-16-child-marriages-aid_N.htm.

[168] U.S. Department of State. "Trafficking in Persons Report 2010 Country Narratives -- Countries N Through Z." April 2009, accessed March 8, 2011, http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/142761.htm.

trafficked from Niger to North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe for involuntary domestic servitude and forced commercial sexual exploitation."[169]

There are many government and nonprofit-led programs fighting against issues that affect children. UNICEF covers many concerns that distress children around the world. Some related to education, violence and poverty. Despite UNICEF led educational programs focused on keeping Nigerien girls in school, only one in two girls enroll in primary school and "one in five continuing on to secondary school."[170] Once an adult, statistics reveal that only 18 percent of women can read.[171] This illustrates the need for more advocacy groups that promote the healthy development of children and young people. NGOs play a vital role in developing programs that promote the rights children are entitled to. While the government implements laws that protect children, NGOs develop strategies to reach out to communities that insist on harmful cultural practices. An advocate for a nonprofit in Niger, Action Against The Use of Child Workers, stated "we're working with traditional chiefs and imams [religious leaders], alongside human rights groups, to show how serious this issue is. It's commercial exploitation of children and we need to fight for it to stop." The voices of advocates are also needed to pressure the government to increase the minimum age of marriage to 18. In order to abolish the practice of child marriage, it is necessary for governments and NGOs to work jointly. There is a need for governments to establish laws and for NGO programs to educate rural communities.

[169] U.S. Department of State. "Trafficking in Persons Report 2010 Country Narratives -- Countries N Through Z." April 2009, accessed March 8, 2011, http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/142761.htm.
[170] IRIN, "Niger: Early marriage – from rural custom to urban business," *IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis from Africa, Asia and the Middle East,* January 16, 2009, accessed January 23, 2011. http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82419.
[171] Ibid.

Chapter V-Yemen

<u>Yemen</u>

Cultural values play an important role in social practices. A social group's behavior is a reflection of what they believe and value as a community. The social practices that groups engage in tend to evolve with time, history, and events that shape and reshape the community's values. Consequently, there are numerous practices that have been abolished in different communities throughout history.[172] The second case study of this thesis is Yemen. The following pages begin with the premise that culture is different within Middle Eastern countries. While the Middle East contains many cases of child marriage, each country has their own customs that may trigger this practice in different ways. This chapter provides a general perspective on the values behind gender roles in the Middle East. It also discusses the values of family and marriage in Yemen. This facilitates an enhanced understanding on why child marriage is prevalent in this country and discloses the main values that elicit this practice.

<u>Middle Eastern cultural values</u>

While Middle Eastern cultures and traditions are particular to each country, there are certain qualities that are frequently shared. One of the most common values in this region and greatly cherished is family honor. In most social groups, immoral behaviors are considered damaging to family honor. Family plays an important role in many Middle Eastern societies where children are brought up in a family-oriented environment of respect towards its preservation and loyalty. It is considered vital for people to remain loyal to their families. Family is envisioned as a person's support system that extends to immediate family members (father, mother, daughter, son) and to aunts, uncles, and

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[172] Slavery, footbinding, female genetal mutilation, and many other practices that have proven to violate human rights.

cousins. They also tend to support each other financially by working together, lending each other money and sharing other economic resources.[173] [174] "Given the lack or inadequacy of governmental programs for unemployment compensation, health insurance and retirement benefits, most people look to their families for those assurances."[175] In general, Middle Eastern culture is tailored towards being hospitable to guests and visitors. There is also a sense of resistance to rules that attempt to overrule social norms and customs.

The importance of the patriarchal family is very common.[176] Patriarchic societies are managed by men and are characterized by the assumption that men must lead political, economic and cultural positions. Patriarchy is not limited to the family sphere; nevertheless in many societies it is the central understanding for both men and women.[177] Many women in these societies believe that it is their responsibility to obey and service men. Consequently, women are associated with internal relations such as family and domestic responsibilities.[178] These roles are considered of lower status than those of men who are perceived as protectors, charged with external affairs, and farming the land.[179] Men are also permitted to live polygamous lives. It is generally an indication of wealth and power.[180]

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[173] Suad Joseph and Susan Slyomovics. *Women and power in the Middle East* (Pennsylvannia: Universtiy of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 4.

[174] Ruth Margolies Beitler and Angelica R. Martinez, *Women's roles in the Middle East and North Africa.* (California: Greenwood Press, 2010), 4.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Juan R. I. Cole, "Gender, Tradition, and History," in *Reconstructing gender in the Middle East: Tradition, Identity, and Power,* ed. Fatma Müge Göçek et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 109.

[177] Joseph. *Women and power in the Middle East.*

[178] Valentine M. Mogohadam, *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2003), 124.

[179] Marta Colburn, *The Republic of Yemen: Development Challenges in the 21st Century* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2002), 66.

[180] Paul J. White and William Stewart Logan. *Remaking the Middle East* (New York: Berg, 1997), 113.

There are many opinions about the roles women exercise in the Middle East. Some argue that women are oppressed and subordinated to male authority and that it is a result of Islamic laws. Others debate that women agree to submit to their husbands and are not socially repressed by these socially stipulated gender roles. "Most women and juniors would argue for retention of these familial relationships (patriarchal) because the ties also provide support."[181] This support is usually translated into protection. Men are envisioned as protectors and guardians of the family while women are considered to be weak and in need of this safeguard.[182] In reality and in different degrees, both of these arguments are experienced in all cultures. Women empowerment and equality has been fought for in many ways throughout world societies. The advancement of women's rights in many countries has been a work in progress. Some countries' evolvement has been gradual and to a slower pace than others. In Middle Eastern countries such as Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon, educated women have been very active in all levels of society.[183] On the other hand, there are still many societies where most women do not work and those who do are limited to "female environments" such as schools.

Gender roles and interactions between sexes evolve over time along with social, educational and cultural developments. In Yemen, gender interactions are shaped by diverse religious, cultural, social and political traditions.[184] Huda A. Seif states that Islam

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[181] Suad Joseph and Susan Slyomovics. *Women and power in the Middle East* (Pennsylvannia: Universtiy of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 5.

[182] Marta Colburn, *The Republic of Yemen: Development Challenges in the 21st Century* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2002), 66.

[183] Craig Lockard, *Societies, Networks, and Transitions.* (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009), 875.

[184] Colburn, *The Republic of Yemen.* 65.

or the "Moslem World" is a determent of the role women have in Yemen.[185] She

explains that while gender roles are not invulnerable to global influences or patriarchy,

these factors are not the only aspects of society that affect women's status in Yemen.

Seif argues that gender roles and gender relations have been shaped by other internal and

external factors such as: "severe labor migration, nationalist struggles against local

religio-political autocratic rulers and colonial powers, radical social revolutions, and

hierarchical caste-like social classes."[186] Men and women relate to each other according

to the social norms established in their culture. In the Middle East, the relationship

between genders is dependent on private and public settings.[187] [188] The levels of intensity

in which these practices are exercised will vary from country to country. Generally,

public display of intimacy amongst men and women is considered offensive. This

includes married couples.

The educational opportunities that women in Yemen are offered will depend on

the region of origin and social and economic status. There are also important differences

between rural and urban women in regards to their access to health care, the gender

division of labor, and gender relations.[189] The difference between rural and urban life is

considerably important when it comes to implementation of local laws. This is due to the

fact that remote regions are generally oblivious to how certain practices harm them and

their families. There are tribes and social groups located in isolated regions that abide to

[185] Huda A. Seif, "Contextualizing Gender and Labor: Class, Ethnicity, and Global Politics in the Yemen Socio-Economy," in *Women's Rights, Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Julie Peters and Andrea Wolper. (London: Routledge, 1995), 290.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Marta Colburn, *The Republic of Yemen: Development Challenges in the 21st Century* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2002), 13.
[188] Mary Ann Fay, "From Warrior-Grandees to Domesticated Bourgeosie," in *Family History in the Middle East: household, property, and gender,* ed. Beshara Doumani. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), 85.
[189] Ibid.

their own norms. Interesting enough, core family values exceed the difference between the physically arduous rural life and the fast-paced city life. There are main values that are shared throughout the country even though the practices within the different social groups are different. According to Anna Hestler and Jo-Ann Spilling regardless of their differences, "a similar set of values regulates the lives of both city and rural dwellers: living in a group (be it family, tribe, or village) is more important than living alone."[190] Even after marriage, families continue to play important role in supporting the couple. The growth of the family is encouraged, as children are seen as gifts.

Child marriage in Yemen

The fertility rate in Yemen is considered one of the highest in the region. A report published by the World Health Organization indicates that 77 percent of births occurred in rural areas.[191] During 1991 and 1992, each family had approximately 8 children. Statistics in 1997 revealed a decrease, with 6 or 7 children per family. These rates consist of wanted and unwanted births. When these mothers were asked if they desired to have their children, almost all affirmed their aspiration to have 5 out of 7 of their children. "According to the survey in 1997, approximately 5 (out of 7) were reported to be wanted fertility, reflecting substantial demand for having children."[192] Recent statistics indicate that there are 67 births per 1,000 adolescents between the ages 15-19 in Yemen.[193]

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[190] Anna Hestler and Jo-Ann Spilling. *Cultures of the World: Yemen* (New York: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2010), 73.
[191] World Health Organization. "Yemen Country Profile. Department of Making Pregnancy Safer," accessed February 22, 2011, http://www.who.int/making_pregnancy_safer/countries/yem.pdf.
[192] Ibid.
[193] The World Bank."Yemen Adolescent Fertility Rate 2008," accessed February 9, 2011, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT.

In 1997, infant mortality rates in Yemen were 34 per 1000 live births.[194] Latest

statistics reveal that 51 infants per 1,000 live births die before reaching one year of

age.[195] In the past, elevated maternal mortality rates have also represented a concern in

Yemen. The World Health Organization estimates that 570 out of 100,000 females die

from maternal causes. These approximations are difficult to attain due to pregnancies in

secluded areas. Many mothers in rural areas give birth in their homes and are unknown

to the government. It is not rare for women to give birth in their homes since there are

limited hospital facilities.[196] This produces other health complications because these

mothers are not receiving proper care.[197]

Many societies in the world may consider the marriage of a 12-year-old girl

unacceptable and horrifying. The reality is that the practice of child marriage is a norm in

various countries. In Yemen, nearly half of all the girls are married before they are 18-

years-old. [198] There are many justifications that surround child marriage in Yemen. This

practice is viewed as: a traditional practice that protects girls' honor by preventing

adultery, a way to reduce poverty in the family or as a tribal tradition (sometimes to settle

scores between rival tribes). The belief that a virgin girl can be easily shaped into a

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[194] World Health Organization. "Yemen Country Profile. Department of Making Pregnancy Safer," accessed February 22, 2011, http://www.who.int/making_pregnancy_safer/countries/yem.pdf.
[195] The World Bank, "Yemen Infant Mortality Rate 2009," accessed February 9, 2011, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.IMRT.IN.
[196] Anna Hestler and Jo-Ann Spilling. *Cultures of the World: Yemen* (New York: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2010), 76.
[197] Marta Colburn, *The Republic of Yemen: Development Challenges in the 21st Century* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2002), 50.
[198] United Kingdom & Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Annual Report on Human Rights 2009," presented by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. 2010, accessed February 26, 2011.

submissive wife is also very common. There is even a tribal proverb that says: "To guarantee a happy marriage, marry a nine-year-old girl."[199]

Even though the different societies that practice child marriage share many characteristics and justifications, there are distinctive elements that vary depending on the culture. For example, in Yemen there is a very common practice within child marriage called "swap marriage." In order to avoid incurring further wedding expenses, some families take advantage of the celebration of one wedding to also marry off another child. This practice is common in many other societies as well, especially among very poor communities. This traditional arrangement known as "swap marriage" is when the brother of the bride also married the sister of the groom.[200]

During the past decade, Yemen has had numerous cases of child marriages that have reached the media and public knowledge. The repercussion of this practice has involved even in the death of various girls and caused local and international groups to pressure the government to increase the minimum age for marriage. In 2010, a 13-year-old girl died five days after her wedding when she suffered a rupture in her sex organs and hemorrhaging. The girl's mother stated that her daughter was tied down by her husband and was forced to have sex. According to the news report, the girl died in a small Yemeni village.[201] Unfortunately, child marriage is the norm for many groups. Such so that in another case of a 9-year-old girl who also died soon after marriage, her parents apologized to the husband "as if trying to make amends for defective

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[199] Nujood Ali and Delphine Minoui, *I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009), 173.
[200] Madeline Wheeler, "Yemen's Sacrificial Child Brides," *Huffington Post*, April 14, 2010, accessed March 22, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/madeline-wheeler/yemens-sacrificial-child_b_535771.html.
[201] Ibid.

merchandise, and even offered him, in exchange, the dead child's seven-year-old sister."[202]

In 2008, the divorce of Nujood Mohammed Al created great international outrage when becoming the first Yemeni child bride to legally end her marriage. Nujood was given to marriage when she was only 9-years-old. Her father has two wives and sixteen children. One of his daughters was raped and another kidnapped. Nujood's father, Ali Muhammad al-Ahdal, claims that he understood marriage was the only alternative that would protect his daughter. Nujood describes her wedding as an unexpected event that she was not prepared for. She claims that no one ever told her or prepared her for the roles she had to take on as a wife. Nujood portrays her life with her 30-year-old husband as constant struggle where he would force her to have sex with him and beat her afterwards.[203] Nujood continually expressed her situation to her husband's family and her parents but they said that ending the marriage would expose the family to shame. One day, Nujood armed herself with boldness and took a taxi to the courthouse. Once at the courthouse she requested to speak to a judge and explained that she wanted a divorce. After waiting outside the courtroom, a judge, Muhammad al-Qadhi greeted her with the question "you're married?"[204] The judge that had Nujood's case granted her a divorce. After her divorce, Nujood received many letters and criticisms from religious and conservative women who claim that she was dishonoring her role as a woman. "Nujood's rebellion, honorable in our eyes, is considered by conservatives as an outrageous affront,

[202] Nujood Ali and Delphine Minoui, *I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009), 173.
[203] Robert F. Worth, "Tiny Voices Defy Child Marriage in Yemen," *New York Times*, June 29, 2008, accessed April 2, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/29/world/middleeast/29marriage.html?pagewanted=1&adxnnlx=1302581724-DroAUl9w3zVO775rtMgCFQ.
[204] Ibid.

punishable, according to extremists, by a murderous "honor crime."[205] On the other hand, her testimony served as a motivation for other girls to escape from the horrifying life of child marriage. Nujood told reporters that she was excited about attending school and wanted to become a human rights lawyer, just like her attorney, or a journalist.

While child marriage is widespread in Yemen, it is seldom exposed in public. Nujood's case surprised the judges at the courthouse. Her boldness might have shocked them because in her little world, what she had accomplished was not the norm; especially in a culture where family disputes are resolved in private. Nujood's attorney, Shada Nasser, told reporters that she was grateful for the judge that had Nujood's case because had it reached a conservative judge, the outcome most likely would have been different.[206]

Role of the government and NGOs

According to Yemeni law,[207] when a bride reserves her opinion, her silence is interpreted as consent to marriage. Many times, even if the bride disagrees with the marriage she is bound to keep silence in honor to her family. Once married, the bride is required to have sexual relations with her husband, disallowing rape within marriage.[208] The wife is also required the permission of her husband to leave the house unless it concerns attending her parents.[209] Polygamy is legal, although the first wife must be informed if her husband is marrying another woman. If a women initiates divorce, she is

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[205] Nujood Ali and Delphine Minoui, *I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009), 173.

[206] Robert F. Worth, "Tiny Voices Defy Child Marriage in Yemen," *New York Times*, June 29, 2008, accessed April 2, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/29/world/middleeast/29marriage.html?pagewanted=1&adxnnlx=130258 1724-DroAUl9w3zVO775rtMgCFQ.

[207] After Yemeni government unified, the new Personal Status Law was implemented in 1992.

[208] Sameena Nazir and Leigh Tomppert, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Citizenship and Justice* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 341.

[209] Ibid.

required to return the dowry or bridal payment made from the groom when fulfilling the marriage contract. Many times this discourages women from seeking divorce.[210] Yemeni marriage laws reflect a disadvantage for women.

After many cases of child marriage in Yemen, where this harmful practice has seen the death of very young girls, human rights activists have pressured the government to not only increase the minimum age for marriage but ban child marriage all together. The ban of child marriage has been discussed and disputed extensively. In 2009, the Yemeni Parliament passed a law that increase the minimum age for marriage to 17. A group of religious leaders went against this law and it was soon withdrawn and in review for consideration. While some attribute child marriage to religious beliefs, others assure that religion prohibits these harmful practices and promotes women's well-being. "Blaming patriarchal cultural traditions for restrictions, some women activists have argued that the Quran supports women's rights, using such arguments to fight against controlling parents and spouses."[211] In eyes of tradition, these prevailing customs are not perceived as restrictions, rather as protections. But as seen through Nujood's case, and many others, the resistance that religious extremists have demonstrated, illustrates the many challenges that abolishing this harmful practice entails.

There are significant discrepancies between law and practice. An example of this is the legal minimum age of marriage. Despite that the minimum age for marriage in Yemen is 15, violations to this law are widespread in Yemen. The examples provided earlier demonstrate how child marriage is practiced in rural areas where apparently the

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[210] Marta Colburn, *The Republic of Yemen: Development Challenges in the 21st Century* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2002), 67.
[211] Craig Lockard, *Societies, Networks, and Transitions.* (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009), 875.

law is not monitored. Although educated women in urban areas are increasingly involved in civil society, women in rural areas continue to be restrained to practices embedded in religious and cultural norms. If women in rural areas have limited access to resources and education that promote their development, how are they to progress and become active citizens of influence? As much as child marriage is considered, within rural areas, a mean for economic development, these communities lack the understanding to know that this practice increases poverty. It does so by reducing girls' educational opportunities and compromising their health with unprepared childbearing.

Ahmad Al-Qurashi, director of the 'San'aa-based Seyaj Organization for the Protection of Children, states that child marriage thrives in rural areas where access to education is absent and poverty is present. He estimates that tens of thousands of underage girls in Yemen are exposed to child marriage.[212] Al-Qurashi claims that the authorities possess the resources to increase awareness about the dangers of child marriage and abolish deeply rooted cultural norms. He sets as examples the use of broadcast media, which is mostly state-run, schools and mosque teachings to emphasis the negative consequences of child marriages.[213]

> People are trying to disguise this practice in a religious light, or they say
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> it's part of the society's traditions… but we think the religious aspect here
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> is very mistaken. They say that when the Prophet Muhammad married his

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[212] Yemen Post, "New Yemen Marriage Law Needs Awareness Campaigns," *Yemen Post*, April 10, 2010, accessed April 5, 2011,
http://www.yemenpost.net/Detail123456789.aspx?ID=3&SubID=155&MainCat=10.
[213] Ibid.

wife, 'Aisha, she was nine years old. This was a matter pertaining to the

prophet alone, and it does not require necessarily that we do it as well.[214]

Just like Al-Qurashi and his organization, there are many NGOs that advocate for

children's rights. The role of organizations and advocates are key in abolishing harmful

cultural practices. Through education and public awareness, NGOs could accomplish

what the law stipulates but many times fail to enforce. The law alone cannot convince a

traditional group that their practices are wrong. Persuasion is fundamental in educating

those who lack the understanding of what to others appears to be common sense.

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[214] Yemen Post, "New Yemen Marriage Law Needs Awareness Campaigns," *Yemen Post*, April 10, 2010,
accessed April 5, 2011,
http://www.yemenpost.net/Detail123456789.aspx?ID=3&SubID=155&MainCat=10.

Chapter VI-Thailand

Thailand is considered the last case study for this thesis in order to exemplify how appropriate policies can help countries attain the improvements they need. The policies that were implemented in this country were not tailored toward abolishing child marriage but developments did diminish its practice and consequences. In the 1960s, East Asia started to experience a sudden economic development known as the "Asian Miracle." There are several theories as to how this rapid development occurred and what were the elements that facilitated its achievements. Clearly the implementation of policies and economic plans played a central part. The government created economic plans and employed programs aimed toward the development of rural areas. Consequently, this improved the condition these communities lived in and debilitated the practice of young girls marrying early by motivating families to keep their children in school.

This chapter starts with an overview on Thai family and marriage values based on tradition. It also provides statistics on infant mortality rates and a synopsis on how and why this country was considered an "Asian Miracle." Efforts that led to Thailand's economic development also opened doors for the improvement of its rural areas. This chapter concludes with an explanation of child marriage in Thailand and the role that the government and NGOs play in order to implement laws and programs tailored toward the population's development.

Thailand's cultural values on family and marriage

Similar to any other social group, Thailand's cultural values have evolved over time. The central values of some of these beliefs have persisted, but in practice these cultural values tend to evolve along with a country's economic and social developments.

One of Thailand's values on family and marriage is the preservation of girl's virginity until marriage. Traditionally, sexual intercourse is considered to occur within marriage. In the past, virginity was a requirement for young girls and it was assumed that women would remain virgin until marriage. This was not necessarily expected of men. While urban young people may not maintain this value, this cultural belief currently remains strong among other groups in rural areas of the country.[215] When a girl loses her virginity, the village believes that the girl must inform her mother so that she can present offerings to the lineage spirits and beg for forgiveness.[216] If the girl fails to inform her mother, a family member will become ill, most likely her mother.[217] Also, when the community and family become aware of premarital sex between couples, both individuals are held accountable. "They are usually given lectures by elders, but in some rural villages they may also face a kind of fine aimed at restoring their honor with local spirits."[218] The social group makes the girls believe that if she engages in sexual relations before marriage, which is considered promiscuity, no other boy will want to marry her.[219] Promiscuity is used to denigrate women's moral character, and never against men.[220] The rumor that spreads throughout the community usually damages the girl's reputation. All these thoughts are purposely taught to girls at a very young age to instil fear. It is believed that this fear will prevent them from initiating sexual intercourse before marriage.

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[215] Juree Vichit-Vadakan, "Women in Politics and Women and Politics: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of the Thai Context," in *Women and politics in Thailand: continuity and change,* ed. Kazuki Iwanaga. (Denmark: NIAS Press, 2008), 35.
[216] Alexandra R. Kapur-Fic, *Thailand: Buddhism, Society, and Women*. (India: Abhinav Publications, 1998), 68.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Arne Kislenko, *Culture and Customs of Thailand*. (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004), 131.
[219] Kapur-Fic, *Thailand: Buddhism, Society, and Women*.
[220] Vichit-Vadakan, "Women in Politics and Women and Politics."

Thailand's social beliefs stem substantially from a patriarchal system. Political and business management positions are mainly male-dominated. Women, on the other hand, take on domestic roles. They are viewed as nurturers and the person who cares for the family's well-being. She usually administers the household's income. According to Alexandra R. Kapur-Fic, Thai women play an economic role in Thailand family circles.[221] She explains that in a subtle and informal manner, Thai women exercise considerable power. "It is their managerial skills which run a large part of the economic activity of the private sector, and their sense of economic values is the mainstay of financial good health of the family and even corporate financing."[222] To a small extent, women in Thailand are becoming more active in leadership positions. There are strong groups that advocate on behalf of women's political involvement and encourage women to participate in decision-making at all levels.[223] Defining women's status in Thai society has been of great debate. Some argue that Thai women possess relative equality with men. Lin Lean Lim states that through economic development, women's economic roles have been reinforced along with it.[224] Lim highlights that a good extent of Thai society is matrilineal,[225] where "the youngest daughter is expected to inherit the family's agricultural holdings."[226] In a matrilocal society, a woman never joins her husband's household. On the other hand, a married man leaves his family to live with his wife's family. The matrilocal societies are less common and do not grant women authority over

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[221] Alexandra R. Kapur-Fic, *Thailand: Buddhism, Society, and Women*. (India: Abhinav Publications, 1998), 572.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Suteera Vichitranonda and Maytinee Bhongsvej, "Women in Politics and Women and Politics: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of the Thai Context," in *Women and politics in Thailand: continuity and change,* ed. Kazuki Iwanaga. (Denmark: NIAS Press, 2008), 76.
[224] Lin Lean Lim, *The Sex Sector: The Economic and Social Bases of Prostitution in Southeast Asia* (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 1998), 132.
[225] A matrilineal society traces descent through the maternal line.
[226] Lim, *The Sex Sector.*

men. Sociologist Steven Goldberg claims that:

> There are societies that are matrilineal and matrilocal and where women
> are accorded veneration and respect but there are no societies which
> violate the universality of patriarchy defined as 'a system of organization
> in which the overwhelming number of upper positions in hierarchies are
> occupied by males.[227]

Goldberg states that all countries possess male-dominated societies at some point in time. He acknowledges the fact that times are changing and women in some countries have more participation in leadership positions that were not seen in the past. Despite this fact, men tend to dominate areas of power in most societies. The degree in which this tendency is manifested will vary depending on the country and period in time. Goldberg claims that since male tendency to dominate is a universal phenomenon, it begs a universal explanation. Through research, Goldberg concludes that men's predisposition to dominate is a natural biological reaction generated by their hormones.[228]

Thailand experienced significant changes in law that consequently affected social practices. For example, polygamy was legal under ancient law. Men would usually have three wives that were classified into categories: the major wife, the minor wife, and the slave wife.[229] The major wife, known as mia klang muang or mia luang, was married with the consent of her parents, and with the agreement that she would carry out this role. Since the law did not stipulate further details as to the amount of major wives permitted, men would have more than one major wife. While the major wife was assigned to care

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[227] Steven Goldberg, *Why men rule: A Theory of Male Dominance*. (New York: William Morrow, 1993), 14
[228] Ibid.
[229] David C. Buxbaum, *Family law and customary law in Asia: A Contemporary Legal Perspective* (Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 91.

for the family, the minor wife, known as mia klang nok or mia noi, would care for her

husbands needs. In some cases she would also have children with him. As for the slave

wife, also known as mia klang thasi, the husband decided when to end her servitude as he

desired. This generally occurred with childbearing. A slave wife also became free when

her husband died. In addition to these three wives, the King also gifted noblemen with a

wife as a reward for admirable service to the country. These wives were known as mia

prarajathan. Although each wife had a designated role, many times their roles overlapped.

These different wives were legally recognized and gave men higher status within society.

The distinctions between the different wives also determined the portions of the

husband's wealth entitled to her once their husband died.[230] Although polygamy was

outlawed in Thailand, there are still cases were men have more than one wife.

Traditionally, women were always under someone's safeguard. Single women,

despite their age, were under the care and protection of their parents. Once married, she

was under her husband's protection.[231] The power that parents had over their children

was transferred to her husband. The husband had the ultimate authority over his wife.[232]

Child marriage in Thailand

There is a considerable difference between the lifestyles in rural and urban areas.

This can be seen in law enforcement. Many laws protect civilians from harmful

traditional practice but the challenge remains in rural areas where other norms and

regulations are followed. The minimum age for marriage in Thailand is 17 for both males

and females. In rural areas, it is not rare for marriages between adolescents under this

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[230] David C. Buxbaum, *Family law and customary law in Asia: A Contemporary Legal Perspective* (Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 91.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Ibid.

age to occur. In these areas, young men and women begin to work in the lands and take on household responsibilities at an early age. Therefore, their ability to overtake assigned responsibilities reflects their readiness for adulthood and marriage. In urban areas, on the other hand, marriage is considered at an older age usually fluctuating between the ages 28 and 35 for both sexes.[233] There is a significant correlation between the education level and age at marriage. "The number of children ever born was lower for literate women in both rural urban residence categories and a women's educational attainment was inversely related to her fertility."[234] Research conducted by the U.S. National Research Council revealed that the more exposed young people are to educational opportunities, the later they marry.

Thailand has had a very interesting decline in its fertility rate since the 1960s. Throughout the early 1960s, Thailand's fertility rate was 6.4.[235] This percentage was considered typical to slightly above average for large third world countries. In the early 1980s, the fertility rate in Thailand dropped to 3.6 and was the third lowest rate of the "fifteen largest less developed countries" reported by the United Nations.[236] During this time, surveys measuring the use of contraceptives for the fifteen largest lesser-developed countries situated Thailand as the third highest rate, behind China and South Korea. This rate was considered above the average for least developed countries.[237] "By 1984, 65 percent of currently married women aged 15-44 were using contraception, thus

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[233] Arne Kislenko, *Culture and Customs of Thailand*. (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004), 131.
[234] John E. Knodel and Apichat Chamratrithirong. *Fertility in Thailand: Trends, Differentials, and Proximate Determinants* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1982), 164.
[235] John E. Knodel, Aphichat Chamratrithirong and Nibhon Debavalya. *Thailand's Reproductive Revolution: Rapid Decline in a Third-Word Country* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1987), 6.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid.

approaching the level characteristic of more developed countries."[238]

During 1950-54, Thailand's infant mortality rate was 132 deaths under the age of 1 per 1,000 live births. In contrast, the infant mortality rate between the years 1985 and 1989 was 28 per 1,000 live births.[239] Currently, Thailand's infant mortality rate is 12 per 1,000 live births.[240]

Cases of child marriage in Thailand are not as common as in other countries. However, among an Asian ethnic group known as the Hmong people,[241] child marriages were very common. Hmong culture highly value large families and usually have a household where extended family members live all under the same roof.[242] They were divided in clans, where individuals with the same family name were members of the same clan. Hmong people have great respect for elderly people, and trust for their leaders. The men of this ethnic group were traditionally allowed to have as many wives as he was able to maintain.[243] The main reason they had more than one wife was for economic convenience since more wives represented more help in working the fields. This group is based on patriarchic values.[244] Women are expected to cater to her husband's needs. Girls were brought up learning to care for the crops and animals as well as domestic tasks. They learned how to sew at a young age and would usually make

[238] John E. Knodel, Aphichat Chamratrithirong and Nibhon Debavalya. *Thailand's Reproductive Revolution: Rapid Decline in a Third-Word Country* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1987), 6.
[239] Warren C. Sanderson and Jee-Peng Tan, *Population in Asia* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1995), 40.
[240] The World Bank, "Thailand: Infant Mortality Rate 2009," accessed Februrary 20, 2011. http://data.worldbank.org/country/thailand.
[241] Hmong people are an Asian ethnic group known to be from the mountainous regions of China, Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand.
[242] Lao Family Community of Minnesota Inc., "Hmong families" (Hmong Cultural Training, Minnesota, 1997).
[243] Ibid.
[244] Bic Ngo, "Contesting "Culture": The Perspectives of Hmong American Female Students on Early Marriage," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 33 (2002): 164.

clothing for the family. Once they mastered their main responsibilities they were

considered mature enough for marriage. These marriages usually occurred between the

ages 14 to 18.[245] Most marriages were arranged. Despite the participation that young

people had in selecting their partner, their parent's involvement played a significant role.

Their arrangement system were based on the consent of the families involved and

finalized with the participation of "neutral individuals who negotiate" the details of the

agreement.[246] [247]

Hmong refugees from Thailand started to migrate in the late 1970s and early

1980s to different parts of America. Throughout their existence, Hmong groups have

experienced oppression and great suffering.[248] According to an article on the work of a

child development center in a Hmong community in Thailand, there have been cases

where girls as young as 13 are being forced into marriage with men over twice their

age.[249] These young girls do not dare to go against their parent's wishes because it is

considered disrespectful. The report states that the Hmong people live in extreme

poverty making an average of $1.60 (U.S. Dollar) per day.[250] Parents alleviate their

financial burden by forcing their young girls into marriage and receiving money in

exchange. Arranged marriages have a price, most Hmong consider it more as an

insurance policy where the wife is of high value and therefore will be treated well by her

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[245] Bic Ngo, "Contesting "Culture": The Perspectives of Hmong American Female Students on Early Marriage," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 33 (2002): 164.
[246] Lao Family Community of Minnesota Inc., "Hmong families" (Hmong Cultural Training, Minnesota, 1997).
[247] Ngo, "Contesting "Culture," 175.
[248] Sucheng Chan, *Hmong Means Free: Life in Laos and America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 41.
[249] Mission Network News, "Compassion gives Hmong girls hope for a future through education," *Mission Network News*, December 29, 2008, accessed February 10, 2011. http://www.mnnonline.org/article/12063.
[250] Ibid.

husband.[251] Through education, the child development center Kao Kor Grace in Thailand

found a way to fight against child marriages. Hmong families would only allow boys to

attend school. The center's employees started to reach out to Hmong communities and

convince them that "they were trying to help families find a way out of poverty."[252] The

organization's approach involved the implementation of health programs and afterschool

tutoring. This gradually began to win over the community's trust. Most of the Hmong

families started to let both boys and girls attend the educational center. A girl grateful for

being a participant of the program stated "I saw a lot of my friends get married and have

many children when they were still young, but they divorced or had a family crisis after

their short marriage." This young girl assures that she would like to become a wife and

mother one day but for the moment she would like to focus on her schoolwork and

becoming a pharmacist.[253]

The central purpose of this thesis is to illustrate the important role that NGOs and

advocacy groups play in order to achieve behavior change in harmful traditional practices

such as child marriage. The work of Kao Kor Grace in Thailand, exemplifies the impact

that organizations have in provoking change. These changes in behavior usually occur

through education and persuasion. Many communities hold on to their practices because

they see no other alternatives. This is where policy and advocacy have space to incite

transformation.

Role of the government and NGOs

Thailand has experienced many changes in law and cultural behavior. There have

[251] Lao Family Community of Minnesota Inc.
[252] Mission Network News, "Compassion gives Hmong girls hope for a future through education," *Mission Network News*, December 29, 2008, accessed February 10, 2011. http://www.mnnonline.org/article/12063.
[253] Ibid.

been changes in laws that promote human rights but some rights still remain hindered by cultural practices. This demonstrates the power that traditional practices have over societies. Gender equality has been an issue that many societies fight for. In 1932, with the change from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy opened doors for the first Constitution to allow men and women to run for election and vote. The Constitution provided women the opportunity to become involved in political activities. Kazuki Iwanaga presents different movements in history that have promoted the progress of women's status and divides them into three periods: from the rule of King Rama V to the end of the absolute monarchy (late eighteenth century to 1932); from the beginning of constitutional monarchy until the International Women's Year (1932-1975); and from 1976 to the present time.[254] These periods were characterized by the influence of advocates, media, and NGOs to achieve change in policy and practice. During King V's time in power, there were three main newspapers: Nareerom, Kulasatree, and Sayamyupadee. These newspapers were used to inform women about current issues and events. Many changes were experienced during this time and gave women a platform for educational opportunities.[255] Women were becoming more encouraged to participate in political issues and fight for equal rights.

In 1955, the government appointed a committee to amend the Commercial Code to comply with the United Nations Charter concerning human rights.[256] At the time, many women's groups fought for their rights when entering marriage. These issues were widely broadcast on the radio and television. "A draft to amend the Commercial Code

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[254] Suteera Vichitranonda and Maytinee Bhongsvej, "Women in Politics and Women and Politics: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of the Thai Context," in *Women and politics in Thailand: continuity and change,* ed. Kazuki Iwanaga. (Denmark: NIAS Press, 2008), 65.
[255] Ibid.
[256] Ibid.

advanced the status of women in five areas: marriage registration, husband's consent,

marital assets, grounds for divorce and alimony."[257]

Throughout 1975-1985, women's advocacy groups were more noticeable. There

were more and more women's groups, each advocating for different issues. Iwanaga

classifies two main movements: advocacy groups, and capacity building and welfare-

oriented groups.[258] The advocacy groups were devoted to eliminating gender-based

oppression. They would accomplish this task by raising awareness, through policy

campaigns, and seeking legislation efforts to address the issues affecting women.

Iwanaga lists different organizations that work together in order to achieve their goals:

Women's Constitution Network and the Coalition to Combat Violence Against Women,

Gender and Development Research Institute, the Association for the Promotion of the

Status of Women, the Gender Watch Group, Friends of Women Foundation, Women's

Foundation, Empower, Women's Movement in Thai Political Reform, including many

others.[259] The welfare-oriented organizations' objective is to improve the conditions for

women. They mainly focus on developing women's potential in economic, social and

political arenas. Some of the groups involved in this area are: alumni associations,

professional groups, and groups that generate income.[260]

The examples provided in this chapter concerning the roles of NGOs are only a

handful compared to the many efforts and accomplishments that are not advertised. The

answers to how East Asian countries were able to grow economically have been an issue

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[257] Suteera Vichitranonda and Maytinee Bhongsvej, "Women in Politics and Women and Politics: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of the Thai Context," in *Women and politics in Thailand: continuity and change,* ed. Kazuki Iwanaga. (Denmark: NIAS Press, 2008), 65.
[258] Ibid., 66.
[259] Ibid., 67-68.
[260] Ibid., 68.

of great debate. Some highlight governmental policies and family planning programs

tailored toward reducing population growth through lowering fertility.[261] These programs

were usually free and aimed at rural areas.[262] The increase of educational opportunities

was mainly due to the decline in fertility rates. Since there were fewer children to cater

to, there were more funds that were allocated to communities that needed programs for

children. The increase of opportunities motivated families to send their children to

school and take advantage of the implemented programs. International research

conducted in Asia provided three main points that influenced the decline of childbearing

and other developments: "increases in the relative size of the labor force, improvements

in education, and higher rates of saving and investments."[263] This research confirms that

the East Asia's economic miracle did not arrive by magic. Its success was a result of

various conditions and development policies that affected population change.[264]

There are various events that led up to the decline in the practice of child marriage

in Thailand. Numerous organizations and researchers indicate that Thailand was a

country that practiced child marriage and now represents a country that has improved in

areas such as: low fertility, low infant mortality and maternal mortality rates, economic

growth, and increased educational opportunities for girls.[265] [266] By no means are these

developments due to ceasing practices of child marriage. These developments are most

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[261] John E. Knodel, Aphichat Chamratrithirong and Nibhon Debavalya. *Thailand's Reproductive Revolution: Rapid Decline in a Third-Word Country* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1987), 7.
[262] Warren C. Sanderson and Jee-Peng Tan, *Population in Asia* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1995), 12.
[263] Andrew Mason, *Population and the Asian Economic Miracle* (Honolulu: East-West Center, 1997), 2.
[264] Ibid.
[265] UNFPA and International Parenthood Planning Foundation. "Ending Child Marriage: A Guide for Global Policy Action," IPPF. Sep 2006, accessed February 10, 2011.
http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf.
[266] Population Action International, "Fact Sheet: How shifts to smaller family sizes contributed to the Asian Miracle," *Population Action International,* July 2006, accessed February 18, 2011.
http://www.populationaction.org/Publications/Fact_Sheets/FS4/Asian_Miracle.pdf.

associated with the implementation of programs aimed toward rural areas, consequently

other improvements stemmed from it. As viewed in previous chapters, child marriage is a

practice embedded in poverty. One of the characteristics that the countries that subscribe

to this practice share, despite cultural differences, is poverty. These communities are in

search of methods that help them survive. This statement does not neglect the cultural

aspect of child marriage. This practice is rooted in traditional believes but once these

communities are presented with other alternatives and education, their practices are most

likely to change. This illustrates how a country's cultural values evolve over time

depending on social and economic developments. These developments can derive in

many forms but education plays an important role. When better alternatives are

presented to these communities, they are most likely to change their practices. "Since

culture is in constant flux, a norm should be interpreted in its contemporary context: in

relation to the whole cultural situation of the particular time."[267]

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[267] Anders Poulsen, *Childbirth and tradition in Northeast Thailand: Forty Years of Development*
(Denmark: NIAS Press, 2007), 86.

Chapter VII-Roles of NGOs

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the importance of NGOs in the process of bringing change to harmful traditional practices. Throughout history, the presence and efforts of advocates have been paramount in achieving national and international change. NGOs and advocacy groups have two important targets when pursuing change. First, they play an important role in influencing the government and policymakers. Second, NGOs also reach out to communities where there is a need of change in practice. In order to accomplish this change, the implementation of appropriate policies and educating the community become vital elements in the process.

This chapter begins with the theoretical approach of this thesis: constructivism. It clarifies the construct of traditional practices embraced by rural areas through the lens of social constructivism. It also explains the process in which NGOs approach governments and policymakers as well as communities that follow harmful traditions. This chapter ends with an explanation of how NGOs can provoke change in the practice of child marriage.

Constructivism

Constructivism was introduced to International Relations in the late 1980s. Its main viewpoint holds that the most important components of international politics come as a result of historical events and certain social conditions as opposed to an inevitable consequence of the nature of politics or human beings.[268] This socially constructed perspective differentiates constructivism from realism and liberalism. Constructivists argue that people create their own security dilemmas and competitions by interacting in

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[268] Jennifer Sterling-Folker, *Making Sense of International Relations Theory* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2006), 115.

particular ways with one another so that these outcomes appear to be inevitable.[269] This

thought opposes realists because they believe that uncertainty provokes decisions that are

the consequences of anarchy and it is inevitable. This theoretic perspective argues that if

the quality of interactions were to change, international outcomes could be very different;

if individuals were to perceive one another as potential friends rather than enemies.

Opposed to realists' view of living in an anarchical world, constructivists believe

that anarchy is what states make of it.[270] Wendt explains that anarchy is the result of the

construction of norms that regulate the interaction between states and that self-help does

not have to take place unless actors fall into viewing states as potential danger. Wendt

holds that if states were to find ways of improving their security without affecting other

states' security in a negative manner, self-help would not be necessary. Meaning that

self-help occurs because states view each other as potential rivals and if this thought

changed, governments would not have to resort to finding ways to maximize their

security and be suspicious.

Constructivists consider identities and interests to be socially constructed. They

argue that interaction among nation-states can lead to the development of identities.

Some of these identities can be competitor and rival, or friend and ally. Through

interaction, these relationships can grow and be reinforced and later confirm the identity

as true. "Actors' words, deeds, and interactions shape the kind of world in which they

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[269] Jennifer Sterling-Folker, *Making Sense of International Relations Theory* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2006), 115.
[270] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It," *International Organization* 46 (1992): 391-425.

exist, and that the world shapes who actors are and what they want."[271] They also explore

the role that ideas, norms, and culture play in promoting structural change.

Social constructivism intends to clarify the way in which ideas and norms shape

politics and how politics shape ideas and norms. To better understand how this shaping

takes place, Finnemore and Sikkink explain it through a three-stage process called the

"norm life cycle."[272] The first stage is emergence; second, norm cascade; and third,

internalization. Emergence norm takes place when entrepreneurs attempt to convince a

significant mass to embrace new norms. The cascade norm takes place when leaders

attempt to socialize with other groups so that they can become norm followers. They find

ways in which leaders can convince the target mass to conform and adapt to the norm

they believe is better. This second stage involves taking the time to study the group that

needs to be convinced. Awareness of current events or any detail that can facilitate the

persuasive process is very important. The third stage in the life cycle is internalization.

At this point norms acquire a "taken-for-granted" quality where the norms are no longer

questioned. This life cycle does a great job in explaining the process in which social

groups can transition into change. Advocates apply different approaches to achieve

change. They work together for a specific cause. Today, many interactions occur through

the communication that organizations have with each other and the pressure they employ

over governments and policymakers. In international politics it is evident the use of

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[271] Alice Ba and Matthew J. Hoffmann, "Making and Remaking the World for IR 101: A Resource for
Teaching Social Constructivism in Introductory Classes," *International Studies Perspectives* 4 (2003): 15,
accessed January 11, 2011.
[272] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,"
International Organization 4 (1998): 896, accessed January 11, 2011.

networks in order to create links that "multiply the channels of access to the international system."[273]

Norm entrepreneurs are actors that advocate on behalf of different ideas or behaviors that should or should not be practiced. They advocate from organizational platforms that position their ideas to give them credibility.[274] These advocates persuade other actors to alter their behavior and beliefs in accordance with the norm the entrepreneur believes that these actors should accept. Constructivists debate about how entrepreneurs convince actors to change their ideas but persuasion, coercion, and socialization are acknowledged. It's a process of construction and reconstruction, which can involve constant change.

Sterling-Folker explains relational constructivism and how it concentrates on social interactions rather than on norms.[275] Relational constructivism is the role that political actors play in given times and the actions that are caused by the specific relationship of rhetorical resources brought up under specific circumstances. It looks into analyzing both sides and the relationships and specific histories that bring them together. They are specifically interested in the role norms play in political change, in the ways norms change and the ways in which they change other political aspects.

Constructivists assume that anarchy is the result of the construction of norms that regulate the interaction between states. That identities and interests are socially constructed. Wendt mentions that international institutions have the capacity to change

[273] Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond borders* (New York: Cornell University, 1998), 2.
[274] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 4 (1998): 897, accessed January 11, 2011.
[275] Jennifer Sterling-Folker, *Making Sense of International Relations Theory* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2006), 139.

state identities and interests.[276] Words become an important aspect that constructivists take into consideration. They highlight the way in which each state utilizes words or a discourse to present their point of view on different international events. The language that actors use is important in understanding their behaviors. They believe that identity is not naturally given but instead socially constructed by ideas. Rodney Bruce Hall holds that society is structured into different institutional systems that serve a specific purpose at a specific time.[277] He explains that individuals behave according to the roles constructed by society and organized into institutions. For instance, institutions such as universities, marriage and states are partly organized by the roles that individuals are assigned to perform within these institutions.

There are different social characteristics that distinguish men from women. As Sterling-Folker mentioned, authority, power, and rationality being associated to men and weakness, dependence, and emotion linked to women.[278] These social constructs bind men and women to certain beliefs that in some cases don't necessarily identify with who they believe they are. Either way, these individuals must abide to social structures that their own social institutions created. Sterling-Folker adds that this is the "basic philosophical conundrum" of constructivism; the way in which free agents who create their own social institutions are constrained by the social structures created by the institutions.[279]

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[276] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It," *International Organization* 46 (1992): 410.
[277] Rodney Bruce Hall, "The Socially Constructed Contexts of Comparative Politics," in *Constructivism and Comparative Politics,* ed. Daniel M. Green. (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2002), 121.
[278] Jennifer Sterling-Folker, *Making Sense of International Relations Theory* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2006), 246.
[279] Ibid., 117.

As studied in social constructivism, it is possible for a norm that was once dominant and socially accepted to be frowned upon by the same social group that encouraged it. Constructivists hold that what we believe to be a norm is a norm because it is socially accepted and that we know the difference between what is accepted or not accepted because of the feedback we receive from society. A norm receives power when a significant group believes in the appropriateness of the norm. This dynamic can be seen through norm entrepreneurs. These actors advocate different ideas about appropriate behavior in a strategic manner that gives their ideas credibility.[280] These actors work to persuade other actors to alter their behavior and norms in accordance with the entrepreneur's ideas on how actors should behave and think.

Networks

Networks are forms of organizations that are characterized by voluntary, reciprocal and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange of information.[281] There are many diverse groups that participate or form part of networks. Some of these can be the media, intergovernmental groups, unions, churches, and foundations, among others. NGOs are most likely to participate in networks because of their value driven purpose. Through communication, and exchange of information and funds, networks create links and come together to change policy. According to Keck and Sikkink, networks are not a new phenomenon. Throughout history, there have been numerous networks that have provoked change in social practices. Keck and Sikkink highlight four: slavery, women suffrage, footbinding, and female circumcision.[282] In the case of

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[280] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It," *International Organization* 46 (1992): 415.
[281] Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond borders* (New York: Cornell University, 1998), 25.
[282] Ibid.

slavery, people in the United States came together demanding its abolition. The end of slavery took many years to become a reality. Many people were killed and held in prison for claiming such a right. Campaigns that were held created pressure that later provoked its abolition. For women suffrage, known as the International Movement of Women Suffrage, people also came together creating campaigns demanding equal voting rights for women as men. Footbinding in China was another practice in which networks came together and gave women who practiced it the option of not engaging in a tradition that in the long term ended up hurting them. The last example Keck and Sikkink use is female circumcision in Kenya. In order to end female circumcision, networks had to find a way to approach this practice and provoke change in policy as well as tradition. Part of their approach involved using terms that impacted public opinion and the government. By using the proper terms, people were able to view this practice as a violation of human rights, in this case women's rights. The approach had to slightly change when it came to the cultural aspect of the practice. They had to rephrase and use a term that would not be as dramatic to draw the government's attention and not too common so that women who practiced it could understand that it was a violation to their bodies and rights. With time and efforts, networks were able to change policy and practices that violated human rights. Most of the time, these efforts require costs since there are not enough funds and resources to support the many injustices that occur in the world.

There are many ways in which networks function and bring about change in policy and cultural practices. Some of these are known as information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics. Information politics is when networks gather information, do research, and investigate different global situations.

They also provide the media with information so that it can reach public knowledge. Part of information politics is using the correct wording and giving situations the importance and attention they deserve. Sometimes, dramatizing is used to highlight certain issues and help draw the public's attention by aiming their interest. This must be done in a strategic manner because this can also distract the public and government from the underlying problem. Many times an event can be overly dramatic and serve the purpose of calling the government and public's attention but then remains as a mere tragic event instead of a persistent issue. For this reason, being strategic is fundamental in this process.

Symbolic politics creates an image in people's minds that helps them remember an issue because of the story it created. The story becomes the symbol of the issue that networks want to influence. Networks do not usually have all the resources they need to create the change they initially want to cause. Networks are about working together for the same cause. Therefore, it is important for networks to create links that complement them in every way. This is when leverage politics come into play. Leverage politics is when networks seek for other resources they lack so that they may reach the government and policymakers and create the change they are looking to provoke. After using all their resources and accomplishing their goal, networks must hold governments and policy makers accountable for what they say or promise. This is accountability politics. Words have no value if the people who say them do not compromise on making them into action. Networks pressure governments to comply with their promises. Politicians are usually more concerned about public opinion and try to abide with their agreements.

"Norms and standards hold governments accountable for sustaining conditions that perpetuate violence and call on them to take steps to address the problem."[283]

Keck and Sikkink use the boomerang effect to explain how networks circumvent governments. The boomerang effect takes place when channels between states and its domestic networks are blocked. Networks contact their international links and bypass their states by creating pressure from the outside.[284] This way, since there is a block between domestic networks and their state, they seek help in other international links so that they can pressure their state. These authors mention how governments are generally inaccessible to the people who really need help. For this reason, networks are extremely important when it comes to seeking social change. Networks have already built links with other organizations to help in different areas. They know where to go and how to cause change. They know the pros and the cons when seeking change. People whose voices are not being heard need these networks to help them achieve improvements and success. Networks are the voices of the unheard and express what to many represents a difficult task. There are many cultural, social and political events that have been changed throughout history and good part of it has involved networks that stand firm against injustices.

Role of NGOs in child marriage

Constructivism and its social perspective provide insight on how society construct and reconstruct their identities and roles throughout time. NGOs play and an important role in constructing and establishing norms in order to impact society. Advocates have

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[283] Holly Johnson, Natalia Ollus and Sami Nevala. *Violence Against Women: An International Perspective* (New York: Springer Science+Business Media, LLC., 2008), 4.
[284] Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond borders* (New York: Cornell University, 1998), 25.

the ability to incorporate efforts from diverse actors and mobilize the community for a

specific cause. Their ability to reach out to communities and obtain desired results

requires great amount of skills and networking. Networks can influence under various

conditions. Keck and Sikkink mention five stages of network influence: issue creation

and agenda setting; influence on discursive positions of states and international

organizations; influence on institutional procedures; influence in policy change in "target

actors" which may be states, international organizations; and influence on state

behavior.[285] Drawing society's attention toward an issue can be done through the media,

meetings, debates, and other similar approaches. These strategies can develop into

international events that create awareness on certain issues. On the second stage of

network influence, networks persuade international actors and states to support

international declarations or to change policy.[286] In the case of influence on institutional

procedures, these changes provide advocates with the opportunity to interact with other

key actors and sometimes open the doors for advocates to "move from outside to inside

pressure strategies."[287] The stage of influence in policy change in "target actors" occurs

in different ways. This change of policy and its impact on society may represent success

but many times the causes of these changes are indefinable. Keck and Sikkink highlight

that the fourth stage must not be confused with the influence on state behavior. "We

speak of stages of impact, and not merely types of impact, because we believe that

increased attention, followed by changes in discursive positions, make governments more

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[285] Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond borders* (New York: Cornell University, 1998),
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[286] Ibid.
[287] Ibid., 26.

vulnerable to the claims that networks raise."[288] State actors who claim to support certain issues in public are usually more vulnerable to abide to these claims than those who do not pronounce their dispositions. The goal for networks, at this point, is to hold these actors accountable rather than provoke them to change their positions. When the first three stages of influence occur, it is most likely for significant policy change to take place.

In the case of child marriage in Yemen, Nujood's experience created a great impact on society. There were so many actors involved in her case after she escaped from her husband and reached the court's knowledge. The aftermath involved the participation of the media, advocates, NGOs, and many other actors that began to pressure the government to increase the minimum age of marriage in Yemen. Although change has yet to occur, the pressure has provoked talks within the government that will eventually produce a change of practice.

As social and economic progress expand to different parts of society, many traditional practices are left to prevail in areas where opportunities for development are almost absent. Child marriage has been a prevalent custom in countless social groups for many years. Despite the strong attachment social groups may have to their customs, constructivism presents the possibility of change in social norms and identities. Although this practice is rooted in tradition, cultural practices are constantly changing with time. Social behaviors are defined by social structures. These social structures are established by the group's shared understanding of what is accepted and expected from the community. Since reality is socially constructed, when presented with a better way of

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[288] Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond borders* (New York: Cornell University, 1998), 26.

life, communities that practice child marriage can stop this tradition. Desired social change does not occur magically. As explained throughout this chapter, strategic approaches must be exercised. While cultures may practice common traditions, knowledge of what makes social groups unique provide advocates the opportunity to shift these beliefs through a strategic approach. This is exemplified through harmful traditional practices that were once widespread and now are abolished or moving toward significant decrease. Practices such as slavery, footbinding, and female circumcision are all examples of how tradition can move toward change.

Throughout the research for this chapter, community education became more and more relevant to inducing change in the practice of child marriage. "Good laws help to affect social change, but education and attitude change is more important."[289] Looking at these cultural practices from the outside may seem foreign to other cultures. For those who practice child marriage, this is the norm. It is how life is lived. The case studies examined for this thesis illustrated the different social identities which child marriage is built on. The social groups that practice child marriages sustain traditional values on marriage and family that develop into the group's identity. As studied through social constructivism, this identity is constructed and can change over time and reconstruct the social group's identity. Identity can be a challenging aspect when seeking change, as it represents who these individuals are as well as defines their collective identity. However, advocates that are established in developing countries such as Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Thailand have attained success in educating adolescent girls.[290] Since most

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[289] Alexandra R. Kapur-Fic, *Thailand: Buddhism, Society, and Women*. (India: Abhinav Publications, 1998), 573.
[290] International Center for Research on Women, "Child Marriage Facts and Figures," accessed January 11, 2011, http://www.icrw.org/child-marriage-facts-and-figures.

girls who attend school will not marry early, persuading families to keep these girls in school has, in practice, increased the minimum age of marriage. Therefore, it is of extreme importance that these social groups are informed and educated about the negative and harmful implications that their practices have on their children and society as a whole.

Chapter VIII-Conclusion

Conclusion

      The purpose of this thesis is to present the ways in which child marriage affects millions of children and examine the role of local governments and NGOs in eradicating this practice. There are two elements that should be addressed in order to end child marriage in any given country: law and practice. Without law, the intent of eliminating a traditional practice is illegitimate, no matter how harmful the practice is. As examined previously, there are numerous international law provisions that even protect children from harmful traditional practices. The CRC charges state parties with the responsibility of implementing laws that protect their children. However, day after day more and more children are pulled into practices that violate their rights. Child marriage is one of many practices that affect children. This custom is one that various organizations and governments are trying to address. Although change can begin from the bottom up, as the authority of a country, each head of state and its government must play a stronger role in implementing laws that prohibits child marriages. The second element is practice. Once laws are established, NGOs and advocacy groups can engage with communities and encourage a change of behavior. There are numerous strategies that NGOs can employ in order to change a traditional practice as considered in the previous chapter.

      Education plays a crucial role in achieving behavior change. Change in practice can occur when these communities are provided with better alternatives to the situations they are in. Once they are educated and informed about alternatives better than their own, they may look forward to change. The poverty these communities are in limits their possibilities of adopting good practice and therefore obtain productive outcomes. The one thing these communities are unsuccessfully trying to prevent is the ongoing, poverty.

Their uninformed practices feed a cycle of poverty and privation. Many times, in order to approach these communities and appeal the interest of the parents involve persuasion and incentives. As explained in the chapter on Thailand, the child development center Kao Kor Grace persuaded the community to bring their children to school through health programs and afterschool tutoring. Incentives serve as a vehicle to attract families to comply.

<u>Case studies</u>

The extent to which child marriage is practiced in each country examined in this thesis varies. Niger, for example, is currently the country with the highest rate of child marriage around the globe. Several Nigerien political leaders have acknowledged the need of the government's intervention in prohibiting this traditional practice but there are no indications that their actions are aligned with their words. There is no information provided to confirm that the government of Niger is working toward abolishing the practice of child marriage in its country. This does not disregard the efforts that organizations are employing. Countless efforts go unnoticed, and many times behind the scene work is what opens the doors for real change. The government of Niger confronts many challenges in order to abolish child marriage. First of all, Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world. It has limited resources and "minimal government services and insufficient funds to develop its resource base."[291] As studied in chapter V, the practice of child marriage in Niger has escalated to the point where it is not only affecting its own country but also intensifying sex trafficking in neighboring countries.

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[291] CIA. "Africa: Niger." *CIA. The World Factbook*, last modified November 9, 2010, accessed March 23, 2011, http://cs.fit.edu/~ryan/factbook/factbook/geos/ng.html.

Parents in Niger are trapped into selling their daughters to sex traffickers. The Trafficking in Persons Report states:

> The Government of Niger does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making any significant efforts to do so; the government demonstrated marginal efforts to combat human trafficking, including traditional slavery, during the last year.[292]

According to the Trafficking in Persons Report, Niger has slightly improved in law enforcement.[293] For instance, an amendment to Article 270 of its penal code prohibits slavery. Niger's labor code, Article 4, also prohibits forced and compulsory labor. The purchasing of a child for prostitution is prohibited under Article 292 and 293 and Article 181 prohibits encouraging and benefiting from child begging. Despite all these laws that protect children and represent advancement toward change of practice, many of these issues remain increasingly practiced in Niger. This may be associated with the weakness of law enforcement. For example, there are many people who have been prosecuted when caught in one of these crimes but are then released after paying fines or completing a short time in prison. Some criminals change their behaviors but obviously, this does not occur over night. It requires determination and proper assistance. For this reason, it is much easier for sex offenders to return to their old practices. Nigerien authorities arrested numerous individuals involved in child trafficking during the last year. In most cases, these individuals were released without charge as a result of the lack

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[292] U.S. Department of State. "Trafficking in Persons Report 2010 Country Narratives -- Countries N Through Z." April 2009, accessed March 8, 2011, http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/142761.htm.
[293] Ibid.

of clear anti-trafficking legislation.[294] In areas where children should be protected, law enforcement is failing to put into practice what is already stipulated by Nigerien law. In 2006, the Nigerien government passed a law that provided pregnant women and children under 5 with free healthcare.[295] This law represented a positive effort to the many health issues Niger has. However, Nigeriens still had to pay for consultation and treatment. These amounts were CFA[296] 500 (US $1) for a child and CFA 1,000 (US $2) for an adult. "This is a fortune in villages where someone who earns CFA 200,000 (US $400) in a year is considered to be rich."[297] Implementation of good laws is important but it is necessary for these provisions to be socially relevant to the accurate conditions these communities are in.

While trafficking of children for sexual purposes is different from child marriage, they both involve slavery and the use of rural areas as targets. Girls are increasingly bought into prostitution and sex trafficking in the name of marriage. As examined in chapter V, Nigerien families are deceived into selling their young daughters into marriage but in reality these men are traffickers who pretend to want a wife.

Contrary to Niger, Yemen's experience with child marriage has escalated to the point where the government is debating over increasing the minimum age for marriage to 17 or 18. Yemen is considered to be moving toward change in this aspect. Part of this movement toward change has involved Nujood's story, which agitated the whole nation and reached the international community as well. Soon after Nujood's story, many other

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[294] U.S. Department of State. "Trafficking in Persons Report 2010 Country Narratives -- Countries N Through Z." April 2009, accessed March 8, 2011, http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/142761.htm.
[295] IRIN. "Niger: Cash Shortfall Derails Child Health Goals," *IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis from Africa, Asia and the Middle East,* August 29, 2006, accessed January 23, 2011. http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=60749.
[296] The CFA is the currency used in Africa: the West African CFA franc and the Central African CFA franc.
[297] IRIN. "Niger."

girls started telling their stories, seeking freedom from abusive husbands, and the desire to continue their education. One of the strongest challenges Yemen confronts when abolishing child marriage is the resistance from conservative and religious groups. Shada Nasser, a lawyer who defends young girls involved in child marriages in Yemen, stated that the resistance on behalf of these groups is so strong that even the judge who approved Nujood's divorce has denied the divorce of other girls.[298] This is mainly attributed to the pressure religious and conservative groups place over judges.[299] Nasser argues that in addition to laws that protect girls from child marriage, educating the communities about the new laws and why this practice is harmful is needed. She adds that the government should also punish parents, the men seeking to marry young girls, and individuals who are accomplices of this practice. "Because if they know there is very strong punishment against them, they would not think about marrying a girl until she is 17 or 18."[300]

There have been many efforts on behalf of advocacy groups and NGOs to end child marriage in Yemen. Approximately 50 percent of the girls in this country are married at age fifteen and younger. According to an article published by IRIN, a Yemeni government body known as the National Women's Committee (NWC) has strongly proposed the increase of the minimum age for marriage.[301] The deputy head of NWC, Horiah Mash-hor, stated that the NWC has been working with 14 local non-governmental organizations and has utilized the radio to increase awareness about child marriage and

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[298] United Nations Radio interview with Shada Nasser. *Yemeni lawyer battles in Court to end child marriages*. March 25, 2010, accessed April 20, 2011, http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/detail/92758.html.
[299] Ibid.
[300] Ibid.
[301] Ibid.

its dangers. She stated that the main reason for the elevated amount of girls dropping out of school was due to child marriages. "We have spread a lot of awareness messages to people to educate them about early marriage and its consequences."[302]

In the case of Thailand, the practice of child marriage was less common than in Niger and Yemen. Child marriage was commonly practiced amongst Hmong groups in Thailand. The role of Thailand's government in implementing programs aimed toward the development of rural areas is what makes this case study interesting. The case of Thailand's development is used as an example of how relevant policy planning can produce results that not only benefits rural areas but the whole country. Thailand did not develop laws to prohibit child marriage. It developed programs intended to improve the conditions of rural areas. Consequently, issues such as high fertility rates, elevated infant and maternal mortality rates, poor health conditions, and less school attendance all began to improve. Since child marriage is practiced in rural areas where people generally live in extreme poverty, policies intended to tackle the poor conditions of these communities will improve many other areas in society. For this reason, governments can learn from strategically addressing issues that feed the cycle of poverty through well thought-out policies.

Ending child marriage

To affirm that child marriage must end is to state the obvious. Throughout this thesis, it has been established the many ways in which child marriage affects the health, emotional and psychological development of young girls as well as deprives them from advancing in their education. This harmful practice does not only affect girls around the

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[302] IRIN. "Yemen: Government body calls for end to child marriage." *IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis from Africa, Asia and the Middle East,* August 3, 2008., accessed February 13, 2011, http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=79584.

globe, it also represents a negative burden on society as a whole.[303] It may seem that the

girls involved in this practice are the only victims; in the long run, the whole society

suffers the consequences. Countries involved in this practice are caught in an everlasting

cycle of poverty. Some of the growing burdens on society, as a result of child marriage

are: population pressure, health care costs and lost opportunities of human

development.[304] Consequently, there is no easy solution to eliminating child marriage.

The international conventions and laws examined in this thesis charges state

parties with the responsibility of protecting their children. Therefore, governments are

obligated to act in protection of children's rights.

By ratifying or acceding to international conventions, state parties accept

the legal duty to abide by the conventions and thereby become obliged to

take steps to protect the exercise and enjoyment of human rights, to

investigate violations, and to provide effective remedies to victims.[305]

Local laws and conventions are important in eradicating child marriage but they

prove to not be enough. Most countries that practice child marriage have increased the

minimum age for marriage. The increase of child marriages in countries where its

practice is prohibited is mostly due to the fact that remote rural areas are not monitored.

These communities are left to follow their own norms, which are covered by the mantle

of tradition.

In order to end child marriage, local governments and advocacy groups must be

involved. They must work collectively and address this issue as a way to also tackle the

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[303] Jeannette Bayisenge, "Early Marriage as a Barrier to Girl's Education: A Development Challenge in Africa," *National University of Rwanda* (2009): 3, accessed February 12, 2011.
[304] Ibid., 9.
[305] Jaya Sagade, *Child Marriage in India: Socio-legal and Human Rights Dimension* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 113.

many problems that stem from this practice. The cooperation of governments must involve the establishment of local laws that protect children, law enforcement, and collaboration with NGOs. To begin, governments must elevate the minimum age for marriage to 18, for both males and females. Along with the implementation of law, must come initiatives to raise public awareness about how child marriage is a harmful practice for all parties involved: children, families, society and the country as a whole. Governments must also strengthen their policies and penalize the adults involved in child marriages: parents, those who arrange the marriage, and the perspective spouse that pays for the agreement. These individuals must know that their harmful practices have consequences. Even though most families resort to child marriage as a result of economic hardships, and do not need additional burdens, they must know that their destructive negotiations have legal penalties. These penalties must come after they are informed and presented with opportunities to develop financially. In this case, the government's involvement must include implementation of laws as well as enforcement. For instance, something as basic as birth registry must be monitored. Unregistered marriages in rural areas are one of the main challenges that tracking the amounts of child marriages has.

Local governments should assist NGOs that are dedicated to educating communities that engage in harmful traditional practices. Proper research and assessment should be completed in order to identify successful programs and build upon them. According to the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), community-

based interventions have been effective in reducing child marriage by implementing multifaceted programs that educate the community on this harmful practice.[306]

As examined in this thesis, the cultural aspect of child marriage is very much. Despite this fact, the underlying element that empowers this practice is poverty. As mentioned before, child marriage is a developmental challenge. There are many organizations that dedicate all their efforts to develop programs aimed toward ending poverty. Child marriage threatens the achievement of these goals by increasing health issues, high fertility rates, elevated maternal and infant mortality rates, low rates of school attendance, just to mention a few. For instance, the practice of child marriage challenges the first six goals of Millennium Development Goals. These goals are not only addressed by the United Nations, but many other organizations that fight against countless social issues. Although there are increasing efforts toward ending poverty, little is heard of abolishing child marriage. The ICRW conducted a program search that only found 69 programs focused on child marriage. There might be many other organizations that are not known of but for 60,000 million girls being affected by child marriage, 69 programs are very little. These programs are absent where it is most needed. The ICRW states, "in six of the 20 countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage, no programs were found."[307] Clearly, the end to poverty will not come as a result of abolishing child marriage. However, the eradication of this practice does promote development in areas that deter poverty. NGOs should directly incorporate child marriage as one of their goals toward achieving development. Considering the end of child marriage as a way to also improve the many issues that affect children and their

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[306] Saranga Jain and Kathleen Kurz. "How to End Child Marriage: Action Strategies for Prevention and Protection." Washington, D.C.: ICRW. 2007. 18.
[307] Ibid.

families is a step toward progress. "Rather than seeing these cultural practices as remote in time and place, as the term "harmful traditional practice" implies, it would be better to regard them as a reflecting contemporary concerns about women's sexuality and childbearing."[308]

This thesis claims that the mobilization of advocacy groups is vital in promoting the wellbeing of children even when the norms established by social groups appear to be unchangeable. Their ability to transcend cultural practices through education and change the social view of child marriage is what will play an important role in the eradication of this practice. Many social practices that violate human rights have seen its end through the pressure that NGOs and international initiatives have employed over governments. They have the ability to reach out to social groups and help them move passed their ideas and norms and replace them with practices that promote children's rights.

The Gender and Development Research Institute (GDRI) in Thailand is a non-profit organization devoted to policy research and advocates on behalf of Thai women's wellbeing. Kazuki Iwanaga presents the diagram of the strategy this organization had in increasing women's involvement in politics. In the diagram, there are three main levels of influence: societal, which intends to raise awareness and recognition of the roles women play in national development and the need to vote for them; institutional, efforts to increase the number of women in strategic institutions; and individual, strengthening the capacity of women as individuals.[309] This diagram provides a clear concept of the great impact an NGO can create when pursuing a goal. In order to change social practices, it is

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[308] Sally Engle Merry, *Gender violence: A Cultural Perspective* (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 128.

[309] Suteera Vichitranonda and Maytinee Bhongsvej, "Women in Politics and Women and Politics: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of the Thai Context," in *Women and politics in Thailand: continuity and change,* ed. Kazuki Iwanaga. (Denmark: NIAS Press, 2008), 70.

necessary for advocacy groups to create activities aimed toward public awareness and provoke public acceptance. In this, follows the three stages of a "norm life cycle:" emergence, cascade, and internalization. The ultimate goal of advocacy groups is to succeed in making the target community internalize the new idea and accept it as its own.[310] Since its existence, GDRI has achieved progress in the accomplishment of its goal to promote women's involvement in politics.

This diagram can also illustrate the way in which NGOs approach other issues discussed in the previous chapter. The role of NGOs in deterring the practice of child marriage involves focusing on: the media, government and policymakers, and the communities that practice child marriage (families). Advocacy groups approach this issue by reaching out to three different levels: society, institutions, and individuals. In order to achieve social transformation, it is necessary to develop activities that promote this change. Following the diagram developed by GDRI, these activities are aimed toward raising awareness, advocacy, and empowerment. The completion of this process takes NGOs to the accomplishment of their goals.[311]

In summary, there is no simple way to end child marriage. When seeking the end of this practice, governments and NGOs are confronted with challenges such as: unregistered marriages, tradition, religion, and poverty. Law enforcement often represents a challenge for governments since local laws are often inconsistent with rooted traditional practices and religious laws. This is due to "official tolerance of cultural, societal and customary norms that shape and govern the institution of marriage and

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[310] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 4 (1998): 896, accessed January 11, 2011.
[311] Figure 1, page 107.

family life."[312] This traditional practice is complex and involves many elements that can be addressed in different ways. Some of the efforts to end this practice must include education, health care provisions, and alternatives for families' economic development. Families that practice child marriage should be presented with alternatives developed by local governments and NGOs that serve as enticements for them to change. Problems do not disappear when they are left unattended. Instead, these issues proliferate and produce other problems. Traditional practices, such as child marriage, must reach public knowledge. The communities must be educated on the many ways this practice affects them. Although education is an important aspect, it is necessary to present these families with economic incentives since the underlying problem of child marriage is poverty. Knowledge of how this practice affects these communities is simply an element of ending this practice. These families lack the resources to change their ways and require the assistance of those who do have the resources and knowledge to help break this cycle of poverty. Because of poverty these communities are compelled to resort to harmful practices that immediately alleviate their economic burden, but only feed their impoverishment in the long term. Local governments must take a stronger stand while uniting forces with NGOs and development projects aimed toward ending child marriage. Throughout history, many human rights were accomplished through community mobilization. If child marriage receives the attention it deserves, this practice can see its end. The strategy that GDRI used to increase women's involvement in politics illustrates the role of NGOs in promoting human rights. This diagram provides a clear concept of how advocacy groups pressure governments and reach out to communities in order to

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[312] I UNFPA and International Parenthood Planning Foundation. "Ending Child Marriage: A Guide for Global Policy Action." IPPF. Sep 2006, accessed February 10, 2011, http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf.

achieve its goal. This is basically what community mobilization is about. In this manner, child marriage should receive the urgency it needs.

Figure 1- GDRI's strategy for increasing female representation in politics
Source: Iwanaga, Kazuki. Women and politics in Thailand: continuity and change. p. 70.
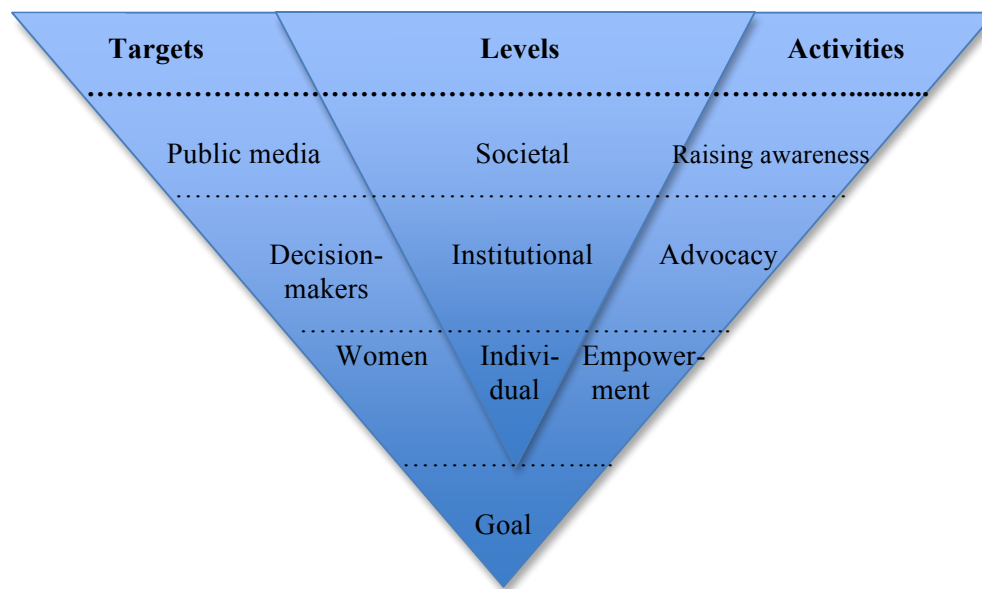
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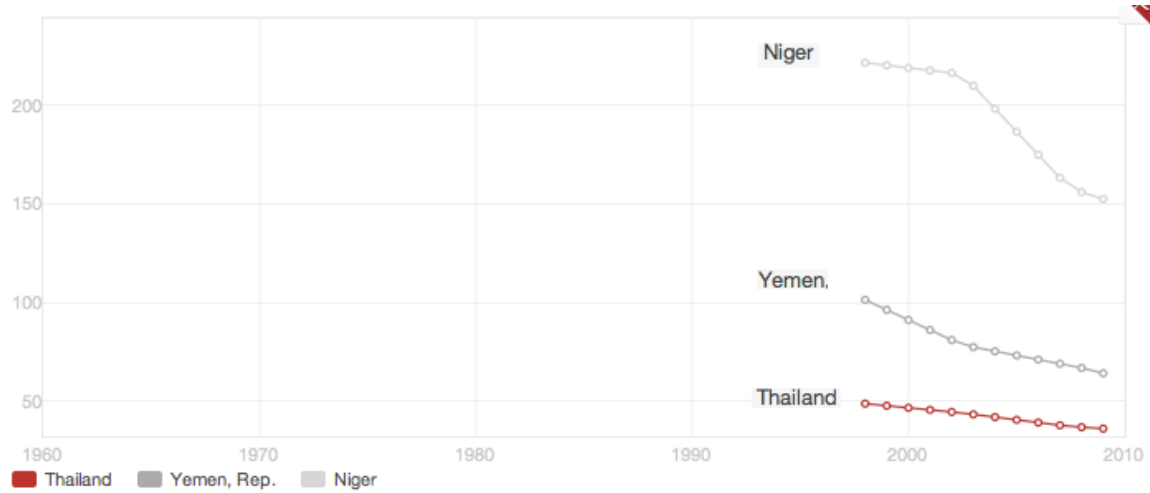
Appendix

Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)

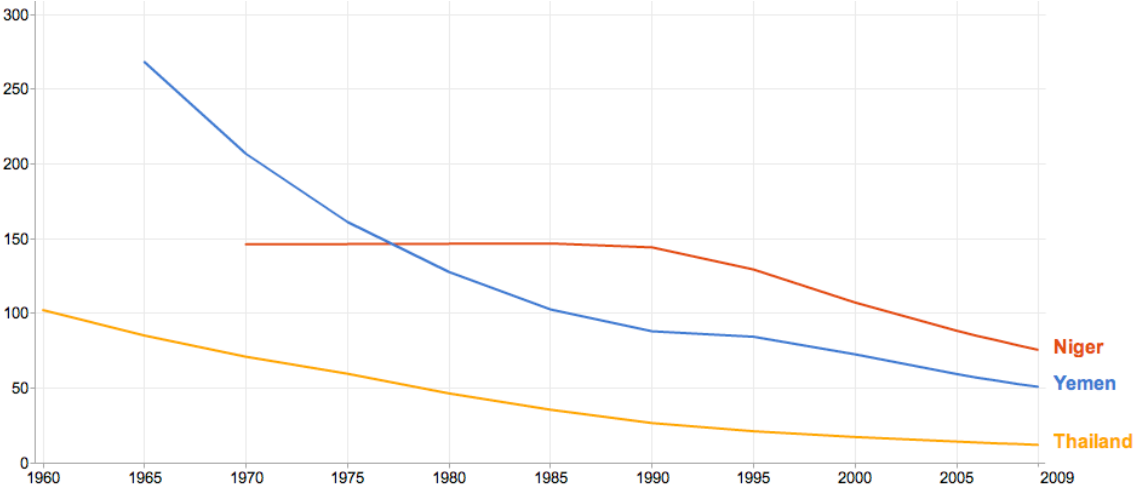Adolescent fertility rate is the number of births per 1,000 women ages 15-19.

Source United Nations Population Division, World Population Prospects.

Catalog Sources World Development Indicators

Infant mortality rate

Infant mortality rate is the number of infants dying before reaching one year of age, per 1,000 live births.

Maternal mortality ratio (modeled estimate, per 100,000 live births)

Maternal mortality ratio is the number of women who die during pregnancy and childbirth, per 100,000 live births. The data are estimated with a regression model using information on fertility, birth attendants, and HIV prevalence.

Thailand   Yemen, Rep.   Niger